



Department of Nursing Services

October 13, 2025

Dear DPS Families,

We have seen an increase in Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD) in our school community. While it can be uncomfortable, HFMD is generally mild and common among younger children. We understand families may have questions about reporting illness and when students should stay home. This letter provides guidance to help you care for your child and keep our school community healthy.

Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD) is a contagious viral illness, most often caused by the coxsackievirus. It spreads through direct contact with nose and throat secretions, saliva, blister fluid, or stool from an infected person. Symptoms typically appear 3–6 days after exposure, and may include fever and sore throat, followed by the more noticeable painful sores in the mouth (often on the tongue, gums, and inside of the cheeks) and/or a rash or small blisters on the hands, feet, and buttocks.

The sores and blisters can be uncomfortable or itchy, but they generally dry up and heal within a week without scarring. It's important to let blisters heal naturally; do not pop them, as the fluid inside can spread the virus to others. Most children recover completely within 7 to 10 days.

To help prevent the spread of HFMD, encourage your child to wash their hands often, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or elbow, and avoid sharing utensils or drinks with anyone who is sick. Avoid touching other children's blisters or their own, as the fluid can spread the virus. Regularly cleaning high-touch surfaces like desks and doorknobs can also help keep germs from spreading.

Children with HFMD should stay home if they have a fever, mouth sores that make it hard to swallow, or are simply not feeling well enough to participate comfortably in school. They can return once they have been fever-free for 24 hours without medication and can take part in normal activities. Blisters do not need to be fully healed before returning, as long as they are dry, covered (as well as possible), and the child feels well.

HFMD is usually managed with supportive care. Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated and use pain relievers (as advised by your healthcare provider) for fever or discomfort. Soft, cool foods can help soothe mouth sores, and plenty of rest will support recovery. If your child's symptoms worsen, if they are unable to stay hydrated, or if you have concerns about healing, please contact your healthcare provider.

We appreciate your cooperation in helping keep our school community healthy. If you have any questions, please contact your school nurse.

Emily Merritt, FNP, MSN, RN
Director of Nursing Services
Darien Public Schools