



Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD)

What is Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD)?

HFMD is an infection caused by the Coxsackie virus. Though it mostly affects young children, it can occur at any age.

How does HFMD spread?

HFMD easily spreads by:

- Direct contact with unwashed hands, discharges from the nose and mouth, stool, or fluid from the blisters of infected people.
- Indirect contact with contaminated toys, objects, or surfaces.
- Coughs and sneezes of an infected person.

What are the symptoms of HFMD?

Symptoms start 3 to 6 days after contact with an infected person and can include:

- Fever, headache, sore throat, loss of appetite, lack of energy, vomiting and/or diarrhea
- Small painful ulcers in the mouth
- A skin rash that looks like red spots, often with small blisters on top, that appear on the hands (palms) and feet (soles), buttocks and sometimes other places on the body, usually lasting 7 to 10 days.

How long is HFMD contagious?

A person can shed the virus from their respiratory tract for about a week and in their stool for several weeks. Some people excreting the virus, including most adults, have no symptoms at all.

When can my child return to school?

Child may return to school/daycare when the fever is gone and feeling well enough to participate.

Children with fluid filled blisters, open mouth sores, and/or oozing blisters should not attend school/daycare. Blisters must be dry and crusted before returning.

How can it be prevented?

- Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after changing diapers, using the toilet and before serving or eating food.
- Cover your cough or sneeze.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and soiled items, including toys.
- Stay at home when you are sick. Keeping sick children at home can lower the chance of spreading illness to other children.
- Avoid close contact such as kissing, hugging, or sharing eating utensils or cups with people with hand, foot, and mouth disease.

Is there treatment for HFMD?

There is no specific treatment. Your health care provider may recommend an over-the-counter drug such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) for fever or pain. Drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated.

When to seek emergency medical care

It is important to seek emergency medical care if your child is showing signs of severe illness such as being unable to eat/drink, persistent vomiting, persistent fever over 39°C, difficulty waking, less or no urine, confusion, and/or rapid breathing.