

Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease

What is Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease?

Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD) is caused by viruses. A person infected with one of these viruses is contagious, which means that they can pass the virus to other people. HFMD is very contagious.

How common is Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease?

HFMD is common and in the U.S. occurs mostly in the summer and fall, but you can get it any time of year. HFMD is common in infants and children younger than 5 years old.

What are the symptoms of Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease?

Symptoms of HFMD include:

- Children often get a fever and other flu-like symptoms 3 to 5 days after they catch the virus. Symptoms can include:
 - Fever
 - Eating or drinking less
 - Sore throat
 - Feeling unwell
- Your child can get painful mouth sores. These sores usually start as small red spots, often on the tongue and insides of the mouth, that blister and can become painful. Signs that swallowing might be painful for your child:
 - Not eating or drinking
 - Drooling more than usual
 - Only wanting to drink cold fluids
- Your child can get a skin rash on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. It can also show up on the buttocks, legs, and arms. The rash usually is not itchy and looks like flat or slightly raised red spots, sometimes with blisters that have an area of redness at their base. Fluid in the blister and the resulting scab that forms as the blister heals can contain the virus that causes hand, foot, and mouth disease. Keep blisters clean and avoid touching them.

How do you get Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease?

You can get HFMD by:

- Contact with respiratory droplets containing virus particles after a sick person coughs or sneezes.
- Touching an infected person or making other close contact, like kissing, hugging, or sharing cups or eating utensils.
- Touching an infected person's feces, such as changing diapers, then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Touching objects and surfaces that have the virus on them, like doorknobs or toys, then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Rarely, you can also get the viruses by swallowing recreational water, such as water in swimming pools. This can happen if the water is not properly treated with chlorine and becomes contaminated with feces from a person who has hand, foot, and mouth disease.

How is Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease diagnosed?

Healthcare providers can usually tell if someone has hand, foot, and mouth disease by examining the patient and the rash appearance while considering the patient's age and other symptoms.

Sometimes, healthcare providers might collect samples from the patient's throat or feces (poop) and send them to a laboratory to test for the virus. However, these tests are rarely done.

What is the treatment for Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease?

Most people with HFMD get better on their own in 7-10 days. There is no specific medical treatment for HFMD. You can take steps to receive the symptoms and prevent dehydration if you or your child are sick.

To treat symptoms and dehydration:

- Take over-the-counter medications to relieve fever and pain caused by mouth sores. Never give aspirin to children.
- Drink enough liquids. Mouth sores can make it painful to swallow, so your child may not want to drink much. Make sure they drink enough to stay hydrated.

When should you see a healthcare provider?

See a healthcare provider if:

- Your child is not drinking enough to stay hydrated
- Symptoms do not improve after 10 days
- Your child has a weakened immune system
- Symptoms are severe
- Your child is very young, especially younger than 6 months

How can Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease be prevented?

You can help prevent catching or spreading HFMD by:

- Always wash your hands after changing diapers, using the toilet, after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, and before and after caring for someone who is sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and shared items, including toys and doorknobs.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. You can get infected with HFMD if you have the virus on your hands and then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Avoid contact with sick people and touching someone with HFMD.
- If your child is sick:
 - Because HFMD is normally mild, children can continue to go to childcare and schools as long as: they have no fever, they have no uncontrolled drooling with mouth sores, and they feel well enough to participate in classroom activities. Talk with your child's healthcare provider if you are still not sure when it is okay for them to return. In some cases, the local health department may require children with HFMD to stay home to control an outbreak.

Huron County Public Health

Is there a vaccine for Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease?

There is no vaccine in the United States to protect against the viruses that cause hand, foot, and mouth disease. Researchers are working to develop vaccines to help prevent hand, foot, and mouth disease in the future.

For more information:

Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <https://www.cdc.gov/hand-foot-mouth/index.html> or call Huron County Public Health at 419-668-1652 ext. 269.