

Hand, Foot & Mouth Disease

Hand, foot, and mouth disease, or HFMD, is a contagious illness that is caused by different viruses. Infants and children younger than 5 years old are more likely to get this disease. However, older children and adults can also get it.

Symptoms usually begin with a fever, reduced appetite, sore throat, and a feeling of being unwell. A day or two after the fever starts; painful sores can develop in the mouth. A skin rash with flat red spots may also develop on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. Sometimes a rash also occurs on the knees, elbows, and buttocks. This rash may blister but won't itch.

Not everyone will get all of these symptoms. Some people may show no symptoms at all, but they can still pass the virus to others.

HFMD is usually not serious. The illness is typically mild, and nearly all patients recover in 7 to 10 days without medical treatment.

- Usually causes fever, painful sores in the mouth, and a rash on the hands and feet
- Is a contagious disease
- Mostly affects infants and children younger than 5 years old, but people of any age can be infected
- Has no specific treatment
- Infection risk can be reduced by practicing good hygiene, such as washing hands often

HFMD is very contagious.

The viruses that cause HFMD can be found in an infected person's:

- nose and throat secretions (such as saliva, sputum, or nasal mucus),
- blister fluid, and
- feces

HFMD spreads from an infected person to others through:

- close contact, such as kissing, hugging, or sharing cups and eating utensils,
- coughing and sneezing,
- contact with feces, for example when changing a diaper,
- contact with blister fluid, and
- touching objects or surfaces that have the virus on them.

People with HFMD are most contagious during the first week of their illness. However, they may be contagious for weeks after symptoms go away. Some people, especially adults, may not develop any symptoms, but they can still spread the viruses to others.

HFMD can cause a fever, mouth sores, and a rash on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet.

HFMD mostly affects infants and children younger than 5 years old. However, older children and adults can get it, too. When someone gets HFMD, they develop immunity to the specific virus that caused their infection. However, because HFMD is caused by several different viruses, people can get the disease again.

There is no specific treatment for HFMD. Fever and pain can be managed with over-the-counter fever reducers and pain relievers, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen. It is important for people with HFMD to drink enough fluids to prevent dehydration.

There is no vaccine to protect against HFMD. However, you can reduce the risk of getting infected with the viruses that cause HFMD by following a few simple steps:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after changing diapers, and help young children do the same.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact such as kissing, hugging, and sharing cups and eating utensils with people who have HFMD.
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as toys and doorknobs, especially if someone is sick.