

HAND, FOOT, AND MOUTH DISEASE

This fact sheet provides general information on hand, foot, and mouth disease.

WHAT IS HAND, FOOT, AND MOUTH DISEASE (HFMD)?

Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD) is a common viral illness that usually affects infants and children up to 10 years old; however, it can sometimes occur in teenagers and adults. Infected persons may not exhibit any or all of the signs and symptoms of the disease. Signs and symptoms include:

- Fever
- Poor appetite
- Sore throat
- Vague feeling of being unwell (malaise)
- Painful sores in the mouth beginning as small red spots (usually in the back of the mouth) that blister and become ulcers.
- Skin rash on the palms of the hands or soles of the feet; it may also appear on the knees, elbows, buttocks, or genital area.

MAJOR SOURCES OF TRANSMISSION

Hand, foot, and mouth disease is caused by viruses belonging to the Enterovirus family. These viruses are found in nose and throat secretions (mucus and saliva), fluid in blisters, and the body wastes of infected persons. The viruses are spread through person-to-person contact, fomite transmission (person-to-contaminated object contact), and respiratory droplet transmission (coughing, sneezing, and speaking).

Infected persons are most contagious during the first week of illness. The viruses that cause HFMD can remain in the body for weeks after a person's symptoms have gone away. This means that infected people can still pass the infection to others even though they may appear well. Those who have hand, foot, and mouth disease should be excluded from Primary classes (including nursery), school, preschool, and childcare until all blisters have dried.

PREVENTION OF HFMD

There is no vaccine to protect against the viruses that cause hand, foot, and mouth disease. The risk of acquiring and spreading HFMD can be minimized by:

- Washing hands frequently
 - Children and adults should wash their hands often with soap and water, especially after using the toilet, changing diapers, or having contact with nose and throat discharge, stools, or blister fluid.
- Avoiding close contact with contagious individuals
 - Children and adults should avoid person-to-person contact such as kissing, hugging, or sharing eating utensils or cups with people who have hand, foot, and mouth disease.
 - Children experiencing symptoms should stay at home so that they do not spread the illness to other children in the nursery or Primary.
- Disinfecting high-touch surfaces, especially in nurseries
 - As part of a routine cleaning program, disinfect frequently touched surfaces, including toys. For dirty surfaces, use the general purpose cleaner provided as part of the meetinghouse member cleaning program. For soiled items, including toys, first clean with the general purpose cleaner, then rinse with water, and allow to air dry.
 - How often each toy should be individually disinfected is decided by the Primary presidency. If a toy has any visible bodily fluid on the surface (such as feces, vomit, mucus, blood), it should immediately be cleaned with the general purpose cleaner, then rinsed off with water, and allowed to dry.

WHAT TO DO IF HFMD IS CONTRACTED

There is no specific treatment for hand, foot, and mouth disease; however, steps can be taken to relieve symptoms, such as:

- Taking over-the-counter medications, such as Tylenol or ibuprofen to relieve pain and fever (Aspirin should *not* be given to children)
- Using mouthwashes or sprays to numb mouth pain.
- Drinking liquids to prevent dehydration (cold milk products are ideal; juices and sodas irritate the mouth because of their acid content)
- Wash blisters on hands or feet regularly with lukewarm water and soap, then pat dry

RESOURCES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD)." 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/hand-foot-mouth/index.html>.

KidsHealth. "Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease." 2017. <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/hfm.html>.

Mayo Clinic. "Hand-Foot-and-Mouth Disease." 2021. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/hand-foot-and-mouth-disease/symptoms-causes/syc-20353035>.

For more information about this topic, call the Risk Management Division:

- 1-801-240-4049
- 1-800-453-3860, ext. 2-4049 (toll free in the United States and Canada)

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