

Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD) Information Sheet

What is Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease?

Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD) is a common illness caused by a virus. HFMD is seen primarily in children younger than 5 years old, although it can occur in adults.

How can you catch HFMD?

The viruses that cause HFMD are found in fluids of the nose and throat (saliva, sputum, or mucus), blister fluid, and stool (poop). HFMD spreads through close personal contact, coughing, sneezing, or contact with contaminated objects. People are most contagious in the first week of illness, but can still spread the disease for weeks after symptoms go away. HFMD is not transmitted by pets or other animals.

What are the symptoms of HFMD?

People infected with HFMD may experience symptoms, though many adults do not show any signs of illness. Symptoms can include:

- Blisters/sores (palms of hands, soles of feet)
- Fever
- Malaise (feeling generally unwell)
- Skin rash
- Poor appetite
- Painful sores in the mouth
- Dehydration

How can you be treated for HFMD?

There is no specific treatment for HFMD. However, symptoms can be reduced by taking over-the-counter medications to relieve fever and discomfort. Mouth pain can be treated by using numbing mouthwashes or sprays. Severe disease is rare, however, people who experience a lasting fever over 102°F, vomiting, severe fatigue, arm/leg weakness or spasms, or breathing problems should see their doctor.

How can you prevent HFMD?

There is no vaccine currently available for HFMD. People can lower their risk of catching HFMD by doing the following:

- Wash hands often using soap and water, especially after using the bathroom or changing diapers.
- Regularly disinfect objects and surfaces that are frequently touched or soiled, such as toys, doorknobs, tables, and counters.
- Avoid kissing, hugging, sharing eating utensils or cups, and other types of close contact with someone that has HFMD.