

Sherman County Health Department

Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease

What is hand, foot and mouth disease?

Hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) is a common viral illness that usually affects infants and children younger than 5 years old. It is a very contagious viral illness. The illness is most common in infants and children and seems to cycle around our schools, daycare centers, and other places children gather, but adults are susceptible as well. The virus usually doesn't last more than a week or so and appears mostly in summer and fall.

Signs and Symptoms

The first symptoms of HFMD appear a few days before the breakout of lesions. You might notice that the child has

- *Fever.
- *Pain or irritability; infants, toddlers, and older children just don't seem like they feel well (just not acting like themselves).
- *Been drinking fewer fluids. Drinking or eating is painful if the child is developing blisters in the mouth.
- *Loss of energy and appetite.

Then you will see...

- *Red, blister-like lesions on the tongue, gums, and inside the cheeks (some can be painful).
- *Red rashes (without itching) and blisters on the palms, soles of the feet, and sometimes the buttocks and legs.



Treatment

In most cases, the infection will go away without treatment in seven to 10 days. However, your doctor may recommend certain treatments to help ease symptoms until the disease has run its course. These can include:

- *prescription or over-the-counter topical ointments to soothe blisters and rashes
- *pain medication, such as [acetaminophen](#) or [ibuprofen](#), to relieve headaches
- *medicated syrups or lozenges to ease painful sore throats

Certain at-home treatments can also provide relief from hand, foot, and mouth disease symptoms. You can try the following home remedies to help make blisters less bothersome:

- *Suck on ice or popsicles.
- *Eat ice cream or sherbet.
- *Drink cold beverages.
- *Avoid citrus fruits, fruit drinks, and soda.
- *Avoid spicy or salty foods.
- *Swishing warm salt water around in the mouth may also help relieve the pain associated with mouth blisters and throat sores. Do this several times a day or as often as needed.

How is the Disease Spread

Viruses can be easily spread from person-to-person. You or your child may contract hand, foot, and mouth disease through contact with an infected person's:

- *saliva
- *fluid from blisters
- *feces
- *respiratory droplets sprayed into the air after coughing or sneezing

Hand, foot, and mouth disease can also be transmitted through direct contact with unwashed hands or a surface containing traces of the virus.

Prevention

There is no vaccine to protect against the viruses that cause HFMD. A person can lower their risk of being infected by

- *Washing hands often with soap and water, especially after changing diapers and using the toilet.
- *Disinfect dirty surfaces and soiled items, including toys.
First wash the items with soap and water; then disinfect them with a solution of chlorine bleach (made by mixing 1 tablespoon of bleach and 4 cups of water [1:64 ratio]).
- *Avoiding close contact such as kissing, hugging, or sharing eating utensils or cups with people with HFMD.

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