

Information for Parents

Hand Foot and Mouth Disease

What Is It?

Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD) is a common viral infection that causes blisters in the mouth and on hands, feet, buttocks, and genital area. This virus typically affects infants and children less than five years old, though sometimes affects older children and adults.

What are the symptoms?

Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease typically begins with a fever and a general feeling of being unwell. One to two days later, blisters develop in the mouth and on hands, feet, buttocks, and sometimes the genital area. The symptoms usually go away in 7-10 days.

How does it spread?

The virus that causes Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease travels through body fluids of infected people through:

- Close personal contact
- The air (when coughing or sneezing)
- Contact with feces
- Contaminated objects and surfaces

What should I do if I suspect my child has hand, foot, and mouth disease?

Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease typically resolves on its own without any medical intervention. Treatment includes medication for the pain and fever such as acetaminophen, paracetamol and ibuprofen. **Do not give children under 18-years-old medication containing aspirin.**

Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease is not usually serious, but the sores in the mouth can make eating and drinking painful for the child. Make sure that your child is taking enough food and fluids so that he or she does not become dehydrated. Cold and soft foods like ice-cream and pudding may be easier for your child to eat.

Your child should see a doctor if:

- He or she is not taking in enough fluids and has not needed to urinate for 6-8 hours
- He or she does not feel better after 3-4 days from the initial symptoms
- If you have difficulty controlling the pain or fever
- If you are concerned about the symptoms or appearance of your child

You should keep your child home while he or she is feeling unwell, has a fever or open blisters.

How is it prevented?

Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease can be prevented by good hand washing after eating, playing, and especially after using the bathroom. Keep surfaces and toys clean with soap and water or disinfectant.

When can my child return to school/day care?

Your child can return to school or daycare once the blisters are dry and he or she is fever-free for 24 hours without the aid of fever medication. The school or daycare nurse may carry out screening before your child is allowed to return to class.

References:

- [CDC Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease information](#)
- [NHS Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease information](#)