

[dkpdf-button]

### **What is hand, foot, and mouth disease?**

Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD) is a rash illness caused by viruses that belong to the Enterovirus genus (group). This group of viruses includes polioviruses, coxsackieviruses, echoviruses, and enteroviruses. HFMD is most common in the summer and early fall.

### **Who gets HFMD?**

HFMD is a common viral illness that usually affects infants and children younger than five years old. However, it can sometimes occur in older children and adults.

### **How is HFMD spread?**

HFMD is spread from person to person by direct contact with the viruses that cause this disease. These viruses are found in the nose and throat secretions (such as saliva or drool, sputum, or mucus from the nose), fluid in blisters, and stool (poop) of infected persons. The viruses can also be spread when infected persons touch or use objects (such as personal items, utensils, cups, toys) and surfaces that are then touched or used by others.

### **What are the symptoms of HFMD?**

HFMD usually starts with a fever, poor appetite, a general feeling of being unwell (malaise), and sore throat. One or two days after fever starts, painful sores that blister usually develop in the mouth and a skin rash might appear. The rash is usually on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet, but might also appear on the knees, elbows, buttocks or genital area. Most people get better on their own in about 7 to 10 days. Some may show no symptoms but will still pass the infection to others. Complications from HFMD are rare.

### **How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?**

Symptoms usually appear 3–5 days after exposure.

### **How is HFMD diagnosed?**

HFMD is one of many infections that cause mouth sores. Healthcare providers determine whether the mouth sores are caused by HFMD by considering the age of the patient, what other symptoms are reported, and what the mouth sores look like. Depending on how severe the symptoms are, samples from the throat or stool might be collected and sent to a laboratory to test for the virus.

### **How long is a person able to spread the disease?**

Infected persons are most contagious during the first week of illness. The viruses that cause HFMD

can remain in the body for weeks after symptoms have gone away. This means that infected people can still pass the infection to others, even though they appear well. Some people who are infected, especially adults, might have no symptoms but are still able to pass the virus to others.

### **What is the treatment for HFMD?**

There is no specific treatment for HFMD. Treatments might be given to relieve fever or pain, and ill persons should drink plenty of fluids. People who are concerned about their symptoms should contact their healthcare provider.

### **How can HFMD be prevented?**

A person can lower the risk of being infected by:

- Washing hands often with soap and water, especially after changing diapers, using the toilet, blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing, and before or after caring for someone who is sick.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces, shared items, dirty surfaces and soiled items, including toys. First wash the items with soap and water, then disinfect with a bleach solution (made by following the directions on the bleach container).
- Avoiding close contact such as kissing, hugging, or sharing eating utensils or cups with people who have HFMD.
- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues in the trash. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow, not your hands.

### **Should a person with HFMD be excluded from work, school or child care?**

HFMD can cause outbreaks in settings that involve a lot of close contact, such as childcare settings. To prevent spread to others, children with HFMD should not go to school or childcare for at least 24 hours after fever is gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine. If the rash is still present and there are blisters in the mouth and excessive drooling, talk to the child's healthcare provider about how long to wait before it is okay to go back to school or childcare. A child with sores that are draining fluids and does not feel well enough to participate in classroom activities should not go to school or childcare.

### **How can I get more information about HFMD?**

- If you have concerns about HFMD, contact your healthcare provider.
- Call your [local health department](#).
- Visit the [CDC page on HFMD](#) for more information.

### **Translations**

[Hand Foot Mouth Fact Sheet in Arabic](#)

[Hand Foot Mouth Fact Sheet in Amharic](#)

[Hand Foot Mouth Fact Sheet in Chinese](#)

[Hand Foot Mouth Fact Sheet in Dari](#)

[Hand Foot Mouth Fact Sheet in Haitian Creole](#)

[Hand Foot Mouth Fact Sheet in Korean](#)

[Hand Food Mouth Fact Sheet in Spanish](#)

[Hand Foot Mouth Fact Sheet in Tagalog](#)

[Hand Foot Mouth Fact Sheet Vietnamese](#)

Opens pdf to download

Opens document to download

Opens in a new window

External link will open in new window. Click link to exit Virginia Department of Health Website.