

## **Hand Foot Mouth Disease**

Hand, foot, and mouth disease is a common viral illness that usually affects infants and children younger than 5 years old. However, it can sometimes occur in adults. Symptoms of hand, foot, and mouth disease include fever, blister-like sores in the mouth, and a skin rash.

Hand, foot, and mouth disease usually starts with a fever, poor appetite, a vague feeling of being unwell (malaise), and sore throat. One or 2 days after fever starts, painful sores usually develop in the mouth. They begin as small red spots that blister and that often become ulcers. The sores are often in the back of the mouth. A skin rash develops over 1 to 2 days. The rash has flat or raised red spots, sometimes with blisters. The rash is usually on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet; it may also appear on the knees, elbows, buttocks or genital area. Persons infected with the viruses that cause hand, foot, and mouth disease may not get all the symptoms of the disease. They may only get mouth sores or skin rash.

### **Transmission**

An infected person may spread the viruses that cause hand, foot, and mouth disease through:

- close personal contact,
- the air (through coughing or sneezing),
- contact with feces,
- contaminated objects and surfaces.

For example, you might get infected by kissing someone who has hand, foot, and mouth disease or by touching a doorknob that has viruses on it then touching your eyes, mouth or nose. Generally, a person with hand, foot, and mouth disease is most contagious during the first week of illness. People can sometimes be contagious for days or weeks after symptoms go away.

You should stay home while you are sick with hand, foot, and mouth disease. Talk with your healthcare provider if you are not sure when you should return to work or school. The same applies to children returning to daycare.

### **Prevention**

There is no vaccine to protect against the viruses that cause hand, foot, and mouth disease. 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. Visit [CDC's Clean Hands Save Lives!](#) for more information.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces and soiled items, including toys.
- Avoiding close contact such as kissing, hugging, or sharing eating utensils or cups with people with hand, foot, and mouth disease.

### **Treatment**

There is no specific treatment for hand, foot and mouth disease. However, some things can be done to relieve symptoms, such as

- Taking over-the-counter medications to relieve pain and fever (Caution: Aspirin should not be given to children.)
- Using mouthwashes or sprays that numb mouth pain

Persons who are concerned about their symptoms should contact their health care provider.

<http://www.cdc.gov/hand-foot-mouth/about/index.html>