

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

HFMD is a very contagious viral rash illness

HFMD is a rash illness commonly caused by coxsackievirus A16, an enterovirus. It typically occurs in children under 5 years old, but older children and adults can also get HFMD. It can spread quickly in schools and day care centers. The illness is usually mild, and complications from HFMD are rare.

HFMD is spread from person to person through direct and indirect contact

HFMD can spread through contact with:

- Respiratory droplets created when an infected person sneezes, coughs, or talks
- Objects and surfaces contaminated with virus particles
- Saliva from an infected person
- Fluid from blisters
- An infected person's feces

The infection is most contagious during the first week of illness, but the virus can spread for 2 to 3 weeks after you first start to feel sick.

Signs and symptoms of HFMD

HFMD is characterized by a blister-like rash or sores found on your hands and feet, as well as inside and around the mouth. You may also have a fever and sore throat.

Symptoms usually appear 3 to 5 days after you come into contact with the virus.

Talk to your healthcare provider if you think you have HFMD

Your healthcare provider can help you determine if your symptoms are due to HFMD or another cause. HFMD is often diagnosed based on symptoms. Lab tests may be needed to confirm the diagnosis in some situations.

While complications from HFMD are rare, some groups are at increased risk for serious health problems if they become sick. These include pregnant women, people with weakened immune systems, and very young children (especially those younger than 6 months). Talk to your healthcare provider right away if you or someone you're caring for has HFMD and is at increased risk.

There is no specific treatment for HFMD

HFMD is usually not serious, and complications from it are rare. Most people get better in 7 to 10 days with little or no medical treatment. There is no specific antiviral medication to treat HFMD; however, over-the-counter medications may help relieve fever and pain caused by mouth sores.

Mouth sores can make it painful to swallow when you have HFMD, but it's important to drink enough fluids to avoid symptoms and complications that can happen due to dehydration.

There are several ways that you can prevent HFMD

There is no vaccine to prevent HFMD, but there are several things you can do to prevent HFMD infections for yourself and others, such as:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after changing diapers, using the toilet, coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose, eating, or preparing food.
- Help children wash their hands and keep blisters clean and covered.
- Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing by using a tissue or your sleeve. Dispose of used tissues in the trash.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands, especially your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Use products effective against enteroviruses to clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and shared items, including toys, doorknobs, sinks, toilets, and diaper changing areas. Follow the instructions on the container regarding the time that the cleaner needs to be applied to the surfaces before being wiped away.
- Avoid close contact with an infected person, such as hugging or kissing them.
- Keep your child home from school or daycare if they're sick and have a fever, uncontrollable "hand-to-mouth" behavior, drooling that they can't contain, or draining sores that can't be completely covered.