

Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease

Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD) is an illness caused by a virus. It is common among children who are younger than 5 years of age. It may occur in adults, but that is rare. It is **not** related to the animal disease: hoof and mouth disease. They are totally different classes and types of viruses.

The initial symptoms of HFMD include:

- fever,
- poor appetite,
- malaise (feeling under the weather), and
- sore throat.

Two days later, the symptoms include:

- painful blisters/ulcers in the mouth,
- rash that develops on the hands and feet (flat or raised spots/blisters), and
- sometimes a rash on the knees, elbows, buttocks, and/or genital area.

Complications of HFMD include:

- dehydration due to difficulty swallowing and not wanting to drink fluids,
- viral meningitis (rare),
- encephalitis (very rare), or
- temporary loss of a fingernail or toenail.

HFMD is highly contagious and is spread from person to person. The time period of contagion is the highest during the first week of the illness; however, the disease can stay in the body for **weeks** after all symptoms are gone and still be spreading the disease. Adults with no symptoms may also be spreading the virus without knowing they have the disease.

A person will come in contact with this disease through bodily fluids, which include:

- nose secretions (coughs, sneezes, runny nose, contaminated surfaces),
- saliva (coughs, sneezes, drool, mouthing toys, contaminated surfaces),
- blister fluids (blisters drain or open up), and

- feces (during diaper changes, checking diapers, toilet trainings, contaminated surfaces).

Prevention Methods

Wash hands often throughout the day, and especially:

- before and after eating, preparing meals, or feeding children and others;
- before and after giving medication;
- after diapering or using the toilet;
- after caring for others who are ill;
- after sneezing or blowing your nose;
- after handling body fluids;
- after handling uncooked food;
- after playing outdoors;
- after handling garbage;
- after handling animals; and
- whenever visibly dirty.

Wash hands for at least 20 seconds with warm water and soap. Scrub briskly to ensure all portions of the hands are cleansed, including under fingernails, wrists, in between fingers, and under any jewelry.

Other prevention methods include:

- Clean and disinfect surfaces, eating utensils, and toys.
 - Clean (remove dirt and grime with a detergent)
 - Disinfect (kill germs with a product that is EPA-registered; dilute bleach is both economical and convenient)
- Practice social distancing (stay home when sick!), and limit close contact (no kissing, hugging, sharing of food items or drinks) with ill persons.

Treatment for HFMD

- Take over-the-counter medication to relieve pain and fever, such as acetaminophen (example: Tylenol or generic).
- Use mouthwashes or sprays to numb any mouth pain.
- Seek medical attention, especially if you are concerned.

For more information: <http://www.cdc.gov/hand-foot-mouth/index.html>