



# Fact Sheet: Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease

*This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information, contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).*

## **What is hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD)?**

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease is a highly contagious human disease caused by various Enteroviruses such as coxsackievirus A6, A16. The viruses are common in the United States among children under five years old, but anyone can get it. It usually occurs in the summer and early fall months, and frequently affects young children in summer day camps and childcare facilities. This is **NOT** the same as Foot and Mouth disease, which is primarily an animal disease. The diseases are caused by different viruses and are not related.

## **How is it spread?**

The disease is spread person-to-person through direct contact with the discharge from the infected person's nose, throat, feces, or fluid in blisters. Infected persons are the most contagious during the first week of illness, but can still pass the infection weeks after their symptoms have gone away. The illness is usually not serious but is very contagious. It can spread quickly at schools and day care centers.

## **What are the symptoms of the hand, foot and mouth disease?**

- Sudden onset of fever
- Sore throat
- Small white blisters in the mouth 1-2 days after the onset of the illness
- Loss of appetite
- Sores on palms, fingers and soles of feet
- Sometimes no specific symptoms

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- a. Person-to-person contact
- b. Droplets made when a person who is sick with HFMD sneezes, coughs, or talks
- c. Contact with contaminated surfaces and objects

### **How is it diagnosed and treated?**

There is no specific treatment for hand, foot, and mouth disease. However, a person can do some things to relieve symptoms:

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

If a person has mouth sores, it might be painful for them to swallow. However, it is important for people with hand, foot, and mouth disease to drink enough liquids to prevent dehydration due to loss of body fluids. If a person cannot swallow enough liquids to avoid dehydration; they may need to receive fluids through an IV within their

vein. A health care provider should be contacted if anyone is concerned about symptom management.

### **How is hand, foot and mouth disease prevented?**

There is currently no vaccine in the United States to protect against the viruses that cause hand, foot, and mouth disease. A person can lower his/her risk of being infected by doing the following:

- Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after changing diapers and using the toilet
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and soiled items, including toys toilets
- Avoid close contact such as kissing, hugging, sharing eating utensils or cups with people with hand, foot, and mouth disease