

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD)

1. What is hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD)?

Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD) is an illness that easily spreads from person to person and is caused by many different viruses. Infants and children younger than 5 years old are more likely to get this disease. But older children and adults can sometimes also get it. In the US and LA County, people are more likely to get HFMD from spring to fall.

2. What are the symptoms of HFMD?

The first symptoms of HFMD are usually fever, sore throat, and not wanting to eat. About 1 to 2 days after fever begins, small red spots might form in the mouth on the inside of the cheek, gums, and tongue. The spots may turn into blisters. A skin rash can also form on the hands, feet, and butt, and sometimes on the arms and legs. The rash might have raised or flat red spots and blisters. Not everyone with HFMD get all of these symptoms. HFMD symptoms are usually mild and go away on their own in 7 to 10 days.

3. How does HFMD spread?

HFMD spreads by touching an infected person's stool (poop), nose and throat fluids (snot and spit), or blister fluid. The virus often spreads when an infected person's unwashed hands touch someone else or things like toys or tabletops. The viruses that cause HFMD can live a long time on surfaces.

4. How is HFMD treated?

There is no specific medicine to treat HFMD. There are medicines that can help treat pain and fever. People with HFMD should rest and drink enough to avoid dehydration (severe loss of body fluids).

5. How can you prevent the spread of HFMD?

There is no vaccine to protect against the viruses that cause hand, foot, and mouth disease. A person can lower their chances of getting or spreading HFMD by:

- Washing hands often with soap and water, especially after changing diapers and using the toilet.
- Cleaning frequently touched surfaces (toys, doorknobs, etc.), especially if someone who is sick touched them.
- Avoiding close contact (such as kissing, hugging, or sharing eating utensils or cups) with people who have HFMD.
- Children with HFMD should stay home from daycare/school until they are without symptoms and their sores have healed (scabbed and no longer leaking fluid).



Key Points:

- HFMD spreads easily from person to person. Infants are more likely to get HFMD.
- The first symptoms are fever and sore throat, then spots can form in the mouth and a rash can form on hands and feet.
- Illness is usually mild and goes away in 7 to 10 days.
- Washing your hands, especially after changing diapers, and cleaning frequently touched items (like toys) are the best ways to keep from getting HFMD.

For more information:

Los Angeles County,
Department of Public Health
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/Diseases/HFMD.htm>

Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention (CDC)
www.cdc.gov/hand-foot-mouth/