

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

What is hand, foot, and mouth disease?

Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD) is an illness caused by a group of viruses called enteroviruses.

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

Common signs and symptoms include sores in the mouth and a skin rash, sometimes with blisters, that often occur on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. The rash can also appear on the knees, elbows, buttocks, or genital area. The illness usually begins with a fever, sore throat, reduced appetite, and generally feeling unwell. People usually become sick within 3-6 days of their exposure, although some people who become infected never develop any signs or symptoms of illness.

How is hand, foot, and mouth disease spread?

The virus is present in an infected person's saliva, feces (poop), and blister fluid. The virus can be spread from person-to-person through direct contact with these infectious fluids. It also is spread through droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus can also be spread indirectly when a person touches contaminated items, such as doorknobs or toys, and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth before washing their hands. People are most infectious during the first week of illness but can continue to be infectious for several weeks. Even if you don't have signs or symptoms of illness, you can still spread the disease. Rarely people can become sick from drinking water contaminated with the virus.

Who is at risk of hand, foot, and mouth disease?

Anyone can get hand, foot, and mouth disease although adults are less likely to develop symptoms. Most illnesses caused by enteroviruses occur in the summer and fall months.

Is hand, foot, and mouth disease serious?

Most people recover from hand, foot, and mouth disease within 7 to 10 days. Complications are rare but can include viral meningitis and encephalitis (brain inflammation).

How is hand, foot, and mouth disease treated?

There is no specific treatment for hand, foot, and mouth disease. Over-the-counter medication may help reduce symptoms such as pain and fever. Sores in the mouth and/or throat may cause dehydration, so it is important for people sick with hand, foot, and mouth disease to stay hydrated. If you are having difficulty keeping yourself or your child hydrated, consult a healthcare provider.

How can I prevent hand, foot, and mouth disease?

- Wash your hands, especially after using the restroom; after changing diapers; before eating; and before, during, and after food preparation.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and soiled items, including toys or other mouthed items.
- Avoid close contact such as kissing, hugging, or sharing eating utensils or cups with people with hand, foot, and mouth disease.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your upper shirt sleeve, not your hands.
- If changing a child's diaper, immediately throw away the diaper and used wipes into a plastic-lined, lidded trash can. After putting on a clean diaper, wash the child's hands with soap and water. Clean and disinfect the

diapering surface. If the diapering surface is fabric, remove the soiled cover and replace it with a fresh one. Then immediately wash your own hands with soap and water.

How can I prevent others from getting sick?

- Wash your hands, especially after using the restroom; after changing diapers; before eating; and before, during, and after food preparation.
- Children with hand, foot, and mouth disease who attend daycare should stay home from daycare until 1) they have no fever for 24 hours after discontinuing the use of fever-reducing medication; AND 2) all lesions are dry or scabbed over; AND 3) no new lesions have appeared for 24 hours.
- Do not prepare foods for others while you are sick.
- Do not share foods with others while you are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and soiled items, including toys or other mouthed items.

Where can I go for more information about hand, foot, and mouth disease?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has information at <https://www.cdc.gov/hand-foot-mouth/index.html>. You can also contact Northern Nevada Public Health Communicable Disease Team at 775-328-2447 or epicenter@nnph.org