



Patient Education:

CARING FOR YOUR CHILD WITH HAND, FOOT, AND MOUTH DISEASE

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CARING FOR YOUR CHILD WITH HAND, FOOT, AND MOUTH DISEASE



Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD) is common in children younger than 10 and usually starts with a sore throat.



Small red blisters may develop on the palms, soles of the feet, and mouth.



Your health care provider makes a diagnosis by checking your child's symptoms and looking at the rash and sores.

What Is Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease?

Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD) is a common viral illness that starts in the throat and affects mainly children younger than age 10. The disease isn't serious, needs no specific treatment, and usually goes away within 2 weeks.

What Causes HFMD?

The cause is coxsackievirus A16. This virus can be found in bowel movements (stool) and body fluids of the nose and throat. It spreads from person to person by touching the body fluids of someone who is infected.

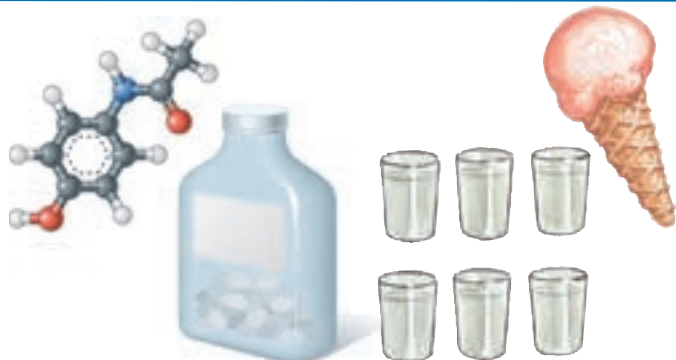
What Are the Symptoms of HFMD?

Symptoms usually start within a week after an exposure and include feeling sick, low-grade fever, sore throat, loss of appetite, headache, and a rash on the palms of the hands, soles of the feet, and buttocks. Sores may begin in the mouth—on the tongue, gums, and insides of the cheeks—several days after fever starts. They start as small red spots that blister.

How Is HFMD Diagnosed?

The health care provider makes a diagnosis by checking symptoms and looking at the rash and sores. The health care provider may take samples of stool or of fluid from the throat for testing.

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No specific treatment is needed, but medicine, such as acetaminophen, may reduce fever and help control pain. Encourage your child to drink liquids and eat soft foods, such as ice cream, custard, and Jell-O to keep your child hydrated.



Avoid spreading the virus by washing your hands regularly, cleaning items and clothing that your child uses.



Keep your child away from other children to avoid spreading the virus.

How Is HFMD Treated?

No specific treatment is needed. Medicine such as acetaminophen may reduce fever and help control pain. Rinsing the mouth or gargling with warm salt water, taking antacids, and using topical anesthetic gels can relieve pain from mouth sores.

Children should rest until the fever is gone. Encourage drinking fluids and offer ice cream, custard, and Jell-O, because solid foods may not be tolerated.

To avoid spreading the disease, use separate eating utensils and boil them, or use disposable utensils. Boil pacifiers and bottle nipples separately from bottles. Keep the child away from other children.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing HFMD:

- ✓ **DO** wash your hands, especially after changing diapers.
- ✓ **DO** wash contaminated surfaces.
- ✓ **DO** wash dirty clothing.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if symptoms get worse and don't improve within 2 weeks.
- ✓ **DO** keep your child away from others.
- ✓ **DO** use acetaminophen or tepid sponge baths for fever. Don't give aspirin.
- ✓ **DO** boil bottle nipples, pacifiers, and eating utensils after use.
- ✓ **DO** have your child use a mild saltwater solution to rinse the mouth.
- ✓ **DO** have your child rest until the fever is gone.
- ✓ **DO** have your child drink liquids and eat soft foods.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if your child gets a high fever that doesn't respond to acetaminophen or sponge baths.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if your child has trouble swallowing and can't take fluids.
- ⊗ **DON'T** let your child become dehydrated.
- ⊗ **DON'T** send your child to preschool or day care until the rash resolves and the child feels better.
- ⊗ **DON'T** share drinking cups or eating utensils.

FROM THE DESK OF

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following sources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Division of Viral and Rickettsial Diseases
Tel: (800) 311-3435
Website: <http://www.cdc.gov>
- The American Academy of Pediatrics
Tel: (847) 434-4000
Website: <http://www.aap.org>