

What is Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD)?

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD) is an illness caused by a virus. It should not be confused with Foot and Mouth disease, which is seen in pigs, sheep and cattle. These two illnesses come from different viruses. Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease is not a serious disease and complications are rare.

Symptoms of Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease may include fever, poor appetite, vomiting and/or diarrhea, feeling tired, headache and sore throat followed by small, painful sores in the mouth. These sores can be found on the sides of the tongue, gums and the inside of the cheeks. A rash of red spots with blisters will then develop on the palms of the hands, the bottom of the feet and sometimes on the buttocks. The illness usually lasts for seven to ten days.

It takes three to six days from the time the virus gets into the body before symptoms start to show. Some people who have the virus in them may not show any symptoms at all.

Who is at risk?

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease is common in infants and children under 10 years of age. It is often spread among children in childcare settings but adults may also be at risk. Infections occur more often when hygiene is poor and during summer and early fall.

How is it spread?

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease spreads from person to person through contact with someone's nose and throat secretions, saliva, fluid from the blisters, or stool. An infected person is most contagious during the first week of illness. The viruses that cause Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease may be on surfaces for long periods of time. It is possible to become sick with Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease from contact with soiled objects.

A person can shed the virus from their respiratory tract for about a week and in their stool for several weeks. Some people excreting the virus, including most adults, have no symptoms at all.

Treatment

There is no treatment for Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease. Doctors may recommend an over-the-counter drug such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) for fever or pain.

Prevention

You can lower the chance of getting sick with Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease by doing the following:

- **Wash your hands.** Make sure hands are properly washed after using the toilet, changing diapers, wiping a child's nose, helping others toilet, before preparing food, etc.

The six steps to good hand washing are:

- **Wet hands** with warm running water
- **Put liquid soap on hands**
- **Lather hands and scrub for 20 seconds**
- **Rinse** under running water
- **Dry** your hands with paper towels
- **Use the towel to turn off the taps**

An alcohol-based hand rub can be added to your hand hygiene routine:

- **Apply the hand rub to your hands.** Use an amount about the size of a dime.
- **Rub your hands together until the hand rub is gone.** Hands will feel dry in about 15 seconds.

- **Clean and sanitize** washroom surfaces and all hand contact surfaces at least daily.
 - Regular cleaning schedules in child care centres and health care facilities with Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease should be enhanced. A 1:50 household bleach solution (approximately 1000 ppm) is recommended for use and can be prepared by mixing 100ml (7 tablespoons) household bleach with 5000ml (20 cups) water. Bleach should be used after the surface is cleaned with soap and water.
- **Stay home when sick.** Keeping sick children at home can lower the chance of spreading the illness to other children at school, day care or playgroups. Children who feel well enough to go to school, day care etc. can return even if they still have the rash.
- **Avoid kissing and sharing anything that has been in someone else's mouth who is sick with Hand Foot and Mouth**

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Infectious Disease Control Team at 519-663-5317 ext. 2330 or go to www.healthunit.com

Information adapted from:

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease. (2017). Retrieved August 20, 2018, from <https://www.cdc.gov/hand-foot-mouth/index.html>

Hand, foot and mouth disease (2018). Retrieved August 20, 2018 from http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/hand_foot_and_mouth_disease

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