

## Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD)

### A Guide for Child Care Centers, Schools, and Families



#### What is Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease?

Hand, foot, and mouth disease is caused by viruses that belong to the [Enterovirus](#) family. It is common in children under 5 years old, but anyone can get it. The illness is usually not serious, but it is very contagious.

#### What are the symptoms?

- **Fever and flu-like symptoms:** Children often get a fever and other flu-like symptoms three to six days after they catch the virus. Symptoms may include fever, eating or drinking less, sore throat, or feeling unwell.
- **Mouth sores:** One or two days after the fever starts, the child may get painful mouth sores (herpangina). These sores usually start as small red spots, often in the back of their mouth, that blister and can become painful.
- **Skin rash:** Rash may occur on the child's palms of the hands and soles of the feet. It may also show up on the knees, elbows, buttocks, or genital area.
  - The rash usually looks like flat, red spots, sometimes with blisters.
  - Fluid in the blister and the resulting scab that forms as the blister heals may contain the virus that causes hand, foot, and mouth disease.
  - Keep blisters or scabs clean and avoid touching them.



#### How is Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease spread?

Hand, foot, and mouth disease is very contagious. People with hand, foot, and mouth disease are usually most contagious during the first week that they are sick. The virus can spread through an infected person's nose and throat secretions, fluid from blisters or scabs, or feces.

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Hand, foot, and mouth disease spreads easily through:

- Person-to-person contact
- Respiratory droplets containing virus particles when an infected person coughs or sneezes
- Contact with contaminated surfaces and objects

### **How is Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease prevented?**

- Handwashing
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces and shared items
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Avoid close contact with sick people

### **What should parents or caregivers do if children are sick with HFMD?**

- Children should stay home while they have symptoms of hand, foot, and mouth disease.
- There is no specific medical treatment for HFMD.
- Most people with HFMD get better on their own in 7-10 days.
- You can take steps to relieve symptoms and prevent dehydration while you or your child are sick.
  - Take over-the-counter medications to relieve fever and pain caused by mouth sores. Never give aspirin to children.
  - Drink enough liquids. Mouth sores can make it painful to swallow, so your child may not want to drink much. Make sure they drink enough to stay hydrated.

### **What should schools and child care centers do if their students have HFMD?**

- Exclude children from school or child care during acute phase (such as open sores) and until fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.
  - Minimum isolation periods and control measures for HFMD are found in page 10 of the Control of Communicable Disease regulations (Title 173, [Chapter 3: School Health, Communicable Disease Control, and Immunization](#))

### **Who can I contact if I have questions on HFMD?**

- Talk to your healthcare provider, school, or child care center.

Adapted from: CDC Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease  
<https://www.cdc.gov/hand-foot-mouth/index.html>, accessed 10/12/21

Andrea Riley RN BSN  
School Health Program Manager  
402-471-1373  
[Andrea.riley@nebraska.gov](mailto:Andrea.riley@nebraska.gov)

**DHHS School Health Program**  
[www.dhhs.ne.gov/schoolhealth](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/schoolhealth)