

- 1-801-240-4049
 - 1-800-453-3860, ext. 2-4049 (toll free in the United States and Canada)
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This fact sheet provides general information on hand, foot, and mouth disease.

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

Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD) is a common viral illness that usually affects infants and children up to 10 years old; however, it can sometimes occur in teenagers and adults.¹ Infected persons may not exhibit any or all of the signs and symptoms of the disease. Signs and symptoms include:

- Fever
- Poor appetite
- Sore throat
- Vague feeling of being unwell (malaise)
- Painful sores in the mouth beginning as small red spots (usually in the back of the mouth) that blister and become ulcers
- Skin rash on the palms of the hands or soles of the feet; it may also appear on the knees, elbows, buttocks, or genital area

How is HFMD spread?

Hand, foot, and mouth disease is primarily spread from person to person through direct contact with the infectious viruses that cause the disease. These viruses are found in nose and throat secretions (mucus and saliva), fluid in blisters, and the body wastes of infected persons. The viruses are spread when infected persons touch objects and surfaces that are then touched by others.

Infected persons are most contagious during the first week of illness. The viruses that cause HFMD can remain in the body for weeks after a person's symptoms have gone away. This means that infected people can still pass the infection to others even though they may appear well. Those who have hand, foot, and mouth disease should be excluded from Primary classes (including nursery), school, preschool, and childcare until all blisters have dried.²

How can HFMD be prevented?

There is no vaccine to protect against the viruses that cause hand, foot, and mouth disease.

In order to lower risk of infection, a person should:

- Wash their hands
 - Children and adults should wash their hands often with soap and water, especially after using the toilet, changing diapers, or having contact with nose and throat discharge, stools, or blister fluid.

- Avoid close contact
 - Children and adults should avoid person-to-person contact such as kissing, hugging, or sharing eating utensils or cups with people who have hand, foot, and mouth disease.
 - Children experiencing symptoms should stay at home so that they do not spread the illness to other children in the nursery or Primary.
- Clean the nursery
 - As part of a routine cleaning program, disinfect dirty surfaces and soiled items, including toys. For dirty surfaces, use the general purpose cleaner provided as part of the meetinghouse member cleaning program. For soiled items, including toys, first clean with the general purpose cleaner, then rinse with water, and allow to air dry.³
 - Occasionally each toy should be individually disinfected. How often this is done is decided by the Primary presidency. If a toy has any visible bodily fluid on the surface (such as feces, vomit, mucus, blood), it should immediately be cleaned with the general purpose cleaner, then rinsed off with water, and allowed to dry.

What to do if HFMD is contracted

There is no specific treatment for hand, foot, and mouth disease; however, some things can be done to relieve symptoms, such as:

- Taking over-the-counter medications, such as Tylenol or ibuprofen to relieve pain and fever. (Aspirin should *not* be given to children).
- Using mouthwashes or sprays to numb mouth pain.
- Drinking liquids to prevent dehydration (the best fluids are cold milk products; juices and sodas irritate the mouth because of their acid content).
- Cleaning blisters on hands or feet regularly (wash with lukewarm water and soap, then pat dry).

Notes

1. “Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease,” California Department of Health, accessed May 15, 2012, <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Documents/HFMD.pdf>.
2. “Hand, foot and mouth disease,” Northern Territory Centre for Disease Control, accessed May 18, 2012, http://www.health.nt.gov.au/library/scripts/objectifyMedia.aspx?file=pdf/45/17.pdf&siteID=1&str_title=Hand%20foot%20and%20mouth%20disease.pdf
3. “Cleaning Solutions,” *Facilities Management Guidelines for Meetinghouses and Other Church Property* (2011), 2.

Other Resources

1. “About Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD),” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed May 17, 2012, <http://www.cdc.gov/hand-foot-mouth/about/index.html>
2. “Hand-foot-mouth disease,” MedlinePlus, accessed May 17, 2012, <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000965.htm>
3. “Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease,” KidsHealth, accessed May 17, 2012, <http://kidshealth.org/parent/infections/skin/hfm.html>