

Frequently Asked Questions

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

Hand, foot, and mouth disease is an illness caused by a virus and is more common in summer and early fall. This illness is usually mild. HFMD is seen more often in children under age 5, but adult cases are not unusual. Outbreaks frequently occur among groups of children such as in childcare and preschool settings.

What are the symptoms of HFMD?

A person with HFMD may have some or all of these mild symptoms:

- Fever, sore throat, poor appetite, feeling unwell
- Tiny sores in the mouth
- Skin rash (flat or bumpy red spots) and may have blisters

The skin rash is usually on the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet. It may also appear on the knees, elbows, buttocks or genital areas.

How do people get HFMD?

The virus that causes HFMD can be found in the throat, nose, feces (poop), and in the blister fluid of an infected person. HFMD is spread from an infected person to others through close personal contact (such as kissing, or sharing forks, cups, etc.). It can also be spread through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Contact with feces or contact with contaminated objects can also spread the virus.

Generally, a person with HFMD is most contagious (able to spread the disease to others) during the first week of illness. People can sometimes be contagious for days or weeks after symptoms go away. Some people, especially adults, who get infected with a virus that causes HFMD may not have any symptoms. However, they may still be contagious. This is why people should always try to wash their hands and cover coughs and sneezes, so they can help prevent the spread of germs.

If someone is exposed to HFMD, symptoms usually develop within three to five days.

Can my pet get HFMD?

Pets cannot get HFMD. HFMD is not spread from people to animals.

How is HFMD controlled?

- Teach children and caregivers/teachers to cover their mouths and noses, with a tissue or sleeve, when sneezing or coughing. Throw tissues away after each use.
- Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after changing diapers and using the toilet.
- Clean and disinfect things that are touched often, including toys.
- Avoid close contact such as kissing, hugging, or sharing eating utensils or cups with people who have hand, foot and mouth disease.

Should people with HFMD be kept out of group settings?

People with HFMD should stay at home until the fever is gone and any drooling due to the mouth sores has stopped. If a child with HFMD meets other criteria for exclusion from child care settings, they should also stay home.

Where can I get more information on HFMD?

- Your health care provider
- Your local health department
- NJ Department of Health <http://www.nj.gov/health>
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov>

This information is intended for educational purposes only and is not intended to replace consultation with a health care professional. Adapted from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

July 2014