

Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (Enteroviral Vesicular Stomatitis with Exanthem)

Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD) is a mild viral illness that is very contagious. This disease is characterized by vesicles (small blisters that contain clear fluid) inside the mouth, on the gums, and on the side of the tongue. On rare occasions, HFMD can turn into meningitis.

Transmission

Everyone is at risk for HFMD, but it usually occurs in children younger than five. Most cases occur in the summer and fall. **People are most contagious during the first week of illness.** This virus can be spread via

- **Person to person** through:
 - **nose and throat secretions**, such as saliva, drool, or nasal mucus.
 - **fluid from blisters or scabs.**
 - **feces** (poop). The virus can continue to be transmitted in the feces up to several weeks after the onset of infection when the person has no apparent illness.

Symptoms

Not everyone who develops HFMD gets ill. For those who do get ill, symptoms usually appear three to six days after exposure and include:

- **Fever.**
- **Poor appetite.**
- **Feeling unwell** (malaise).
- **Sore throat.**
- **Painful Sores.** They start as small red spots that blister and often become ulcers. The sores are often located on the tongue and the insides of the mouth.
 - These often occur one to two days after a fever starts.
- **Skin rash.** Flat or raised red spots, sometimes with blisters. It is usually located on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet; it may also appear on the knees, elbows, buttocks, or genital area.
 - This often occurs after one to two days

Diagnosis

A health care provider can diagnose HFMD. Laboratory tests are not usually needed.

Treatment

There is no specific treatment for HFMD. People with the infection should:

- **Rest.**
- **Be given medication and liquids** to control fever and pain associated with the disease.
 - Young children may be given fluids through an IV in their veins if they are not able to tolerate drinking water.
 - Nursing infants may develop blisters and become dehydrated.
 - Do not give aspirin to children with HFMD.

Prevention

- **Hand washing** after contact with nose and throat discharges and feces.
- **Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces** and soiled items, including toys.
- **Prevent close contact** such as kissing, hugging, or sharing eating utensils or cups with people that have HFMD.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth** if you have the virus.

If you have further questions about the treatment of your HFMD, contact your health care provider.

Exclusion Guidance

Individuals with HFMD should not be excluded from work, school, or childcare unless the [general exclusions apply](#).

For additional information about HFMD, contact the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services', Division of Family Health, at 800.472.2286.

Resources:

1. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2021, February 2) *CDC- Hand Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD)*. Retrieved April 26, 2023, from <https://www.cdc.gov/hand-foot-mouth/index.html>.