

FACT SHEET

Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease

What is hand, foot, and mouth disease?

Hand, foot, and mouth disease is an illness caused by a virus. It occurs most frequently among children under 5, although adults can get it too. The disease begins with a mild fever, malaise, and poor appetite and then small blister-like sores appear on the inside of the mouth, palms, fingers, and soles of the feet. It is very contagious.

How is it spread?

Hand, foot, and mouth disease is spread by direct contact with nose and throat discharges, saliva, and fluid from blisters. It may be spread as long as the blisters/rash are present, and for several weeks via the stool of an infected person. People are usually most contagious during the first week, with symptoms usually lasting 7 to 10 days. It is common in summer and fall in the U.S., especially in schools and daycares.

What are the symptoms?

- Small blister-like sores on inside of mouth
- Small sores resembling rash on palms, fingers, and soles of feet
- Fever
- Malaise
- Poor appetite
- Sore throat

How can it be prevented?

There is no specific medicine or vaccine to prevent hand, foot, and mouth disease. However, following these simple steps can help prevent the spread of hand, foot, and mouth disease.

- Encourage good hand washing and personal hygiene.
- Wash your hands after using the bathroom, changing diapers, blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, and before caring for a sick person.
- Wash soiled clothing, and discard used tissues.
- Cover your mouth when you sneeze or cough.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Exclude infected children from day-care or school until fever has disappeared and new sores are not developing.

How is it treated?

There is no specific treatment for hand, foot, and mouth disease. Treatment involves managing symptoms and preventing dehydration. Monitor fluid intake. Children may become dehydrated if they are not able to swallow enough fluids due to pain from blisters in the mouth. If your child becomes dehydrated seek medical care.

This fact sheet is for informational purposes only and is not intended for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov.

Livingston County Health Department

2300 East Grand River Avenue, Suite 102, Howell, MI 48843 • 517-546-9850 • www.LCHD.org