

# HAND, FOOT, AND MOUTH DISEASE



Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD) is caused by enteroviruses that spread year round. Anyone can get HFMD, but most cases occur in infants and young children during the summer and fall. HFMD is usually not serious, but it can spread quickly, especially in schools and day care centers. Symptoms of HFMD include fever, mouth sores, and skin rash. On rare occasions, people infected with the virus that causes HFMD may develop swelling of brain (encephalitis) or the membranes covering the brain and spinal cord (meningitis).



## What causes it?

- ▶ You can get HFMD by:
  - ▶ Having contact with respiratory droplets from a sick person's coughs or sneezes.
  - ▶ Touching a sick person (such as kissing, hugging, or sharing cups or eating utensils).
  - ▶ Touching poop from a sick person (for example, when changing diapers).
  - ▶ Touching objects and surfaces that have the virus on them (such as toys, doorknobs, tabletops).



## What are the signs and symptoms?

- ▶ Most people with HFMD have fever, flu-like symptoms, mouth sores, and a skin rash.
  - ▶ Mouth sores are usually painful and often start as small red spots on the tongue and inside of the mouth. Infants with mouth sores may stop nursing and become dehydrated.
  - ▶ Skin rash usually shows up on the hands and feet. It can also appear on the buttocks, legs, and arms.
  - ▶ The rash looks like flat or slightly raised red spots that can also turn into blisters. The fluid inside blisters can contain the virus that causes HFMD.



*Skin rash caused by HFMD.*



## What are the treatment options?

- ▶ Most people get better on their own in 7 to 10 days. Taking over-the-counter medicines can relieve fever and pain caused by mouth sores. Drinking plenty of liquids can help prevent dehydration.
- ▶ Contact a doctor if your child is younger than 6 months old, they are not drinking enough to stay hydrated, their symptoms are severe (for example, fever lasting more than 3 days), or symptoms last longer than 10 days.
- ▶ Children with HFMD may continue to go to day care and school if they are fever-free, have no uncontrolled drooling with mouth sores, and feel well enough to attend. In some cases, children may need to stay home to control an outbreak of HFMD.



## How can it be prevented?

- ▶ Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Be sure to wash hands after changing diapers, using the toilet, blowing your nose, and before and after caring for someone who is sick.
- ▶ Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and items, including toys and doorknobs.
- ▶ Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- ▶ Avoid close contact with sick people, such as hugging or kissing them.

