



# Hand, Foot & Mouth Disease

[Hand, foot, and mouth disease, or HFMD](#), is a contagious illness that is caused by different viruses. HFMD is not the same as foot and mouth disease (also called hoof and mouth disease). HFMD affects people whereas foot and mouth disease affects only animals, such as cattle and pigs. Infants and children younger than 5 years old are more likely to get this disease, however, older children and adults can also get it.



Symptoms usually begin with a fever, decreased appetite, sore throat, and fatigue (feeling sick or tired). A day or two after the fever starts, painful sores can develop in the mouth. A skin rash with flat red spots may also develop on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. Sometimes a rash also occurs on the knees, elbows, and buttocks. This rash may blister but won't itch. Not everyone will get all of these symptoms. Some people may show no symptoms at all, but they can still pass the virus to others. The viruses that cause HFMD can be found in an infected person's nose and throat secretions (such as saliva, sputum, or nasal mucus), blister fluid, and feces. People with HFMD are most contagious during the first week of their illness, however, they may be contagious for weeks after symptoms go away. Some people, especially adults, may not develop any symptoms, but they can still spread the viruses to others.

HFMD is usually not serious. The illness is typically mild, and nearly all patients recover in 7 to 10 days without medical treatment. There is no vaccine to protect against HFMD. However, you can reduce the risk of getting infected with the viruses that cause HFMD by following a few simple steps:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after changing diapers, and help young children do the same.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact such as kissing, hugging, and sharing cups and eating utensils with people who have HFMD .
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as toys and doorknobs, especially if someone is sick.