

# Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease

Hand, foot, and mouth disease is a common viral illness that usually affects infants and children younger than 5 years old. However, it can sometimes occur in older children and adults. It usually starts with

- A fever
- Reduced appetite
- Sore throat
- A feeling of being unwell (malaise)

One or two days after the fever starts, painful sores can develop in the mouth (herpangina). They usually begin as small red spots, often in the back of the mouth, that blister and can become painful.

A skin rash on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet may also develop over one or two days as flat, red spots, sometimes with blisters. It may also appear on the knees, elbows, buttocks or genital area.

Some people, especially young children, may get dehydrated if they are not able to swallow enough liquids because of painful mouth sores. You should seek medical care in these cases.

Not everyone will get all of these symptoms. Some people, especially adults, may become infected and show no symptoms at all, but they can still pass the virus to others.

Most people who get hand, foot, and mouth disease will have mild illness or no symptoms at all. But a small proportion of cases can be more severe.

## Prevention

There is currently no vaccine in the United States to protect against the viruses that cause hand, foot, and mouth disease. But researchers are working to develop vaccines to help prevent hand, foot, and mouth disease in the future.

You can lower your risk of being infected by doing the following:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after changing diapers and using the toilet. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and soiled items, including toys
- Avoid close contact such as kissing, hugging, or sharing eating utensils or cups with people with hand, foot, and mouth disease

## Treatment

There is no specific treatment for hand, foot, and mouth disease. However, you can do some things to relieve symptoms:

- Take over-the-counter medications to relieve pain and fever (Caution: Aspirin should not be given to children.)
- Use mouthwashes or sprays that numb mouth pain

If a person has mouth sores, it might be painful for them to swallow. However, it is important for people with hand, foot, and mouth disease to drink enough liquids to prevent dehydration (loss of body fluids). If a person cannot swallow enough liquids to avoid dehydration, they may need to receive them through an IV in their vein.

If you are concerned about your symptoms you should contact your health care provider.