

Hand, foot and mouth disease

Hand Foot and Mouth is a common childhood illness, caused by a virus called Coxsackie. It is usually a mild infection that does not need specific treatment and will usually get better on its own. Antibiotics will not help.

It commonly affects children under 5 years of age, and initial symptoms can include a high temperature, sore throat, reduced appetite and generally feeling unwell.

After a few days **mouth ulcers** and a rash will appear.



Ulcers appear in the mouth and on the tongue. These can be painful and make it difficult to eat or drink.



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Red spots, which develop into blisters, usually appear on the hands and feet.



The blisters are grey in the centre and can be painful.

It's possible to get hand, foot and mouth disease more than once.

If you are not sure it is Hand Foot and Mouth disease look at other childhood rashes [here](#).

When should you worry?



RED

- Has blue lips
- Too breathless to talk / eat or drink
- Becomes pale, mottled and feels abnormally cold to touch
- Becomes extremely agitated, confused or very lethargic (difficult to wake)
- Develops persistent headache, neck stiffness or balance problems
- Has a fit or seizure
- Has a rash that does not disappear with pressure (the 'Glass Test')

You need urgent help.

Go to the nearest Hospital Emergency (A&E) Department or phone 999



AMBER

- Increasing pain and redness between the spots
- Symptoms do not improve after 10 days
- Temperatures for 5 or more days
- Seems dehydrated: (sunken eyes, drowsy, no urine passed in 12 hours)
- Has extreme shivering or complains of muscle pain
- Is getting worse or if you are worried

You need to contact a doctor or nurse today.

Please ring your GP surgery or call NHS 111 - dial 111

If symptoms persist for 4 hours or more and you have not been able to speak to either a member of staff from your GP practice or to NHS 111 staff, recheck that your child has not developed any red features.

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GREEN

If none of the above features present

Continue providing your child's care at home. If you are still concerned about your child, speak to your **health visitor**, or **local pharmacist** or call NHS 111– dial 111.

You should keep your child off school or the nursery while they are feeling unwell. However, once they are feeling better they can go back to nursery/school and there is no need to wait until all the blisters have healed. However, it is best to let the school or nursery know that they have had hand foot, and mouth disease

Self care

Continue providing your child's care at home. If you are still concerned about your child, speak to your **health visitor**, **local pharmacist** or call NHS 111– dial 111

Children and young people who are unwell and have a high temperature should stay at home. They can go back to school, college or childcare when they no longer have a high temperature, and are well enough to attend.

What should you do?

Seeing your child unwell with hand foot and mouth disease can be very distressing for a parent and while there is no treatment for the virus itself there are simple things you can do to make your child more comfortable:

- Get them to drink plenty of fluids and try ice lollies if your child is not drinking much
- Try soft foods like soup, yoghurt or ice cream – avoid hot and spicy foods as these may be painful on ulcers in the mouth

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- Speak with a pharmacist for advice about treatments, such as mouth ulcer gels, sprays and mouthwashes to relieve pain.
- Paracetamol or ibuprofen for temperature / pain
- While there is normally no risk to pregnant people it is best to avoid close contact if possible

You can't take antibiotics or medicines to cure hand, foot and mouth disease – it has to run its course. It usually gets better in 7 to 10 days.

How long will your child's symptoms last?

- Hand foot and mouth disease usually lasts 7-10 days
- It is easy to spread for first 5 days (it is spread in sneezes, coughing and poo)
- Wash your hands often and avoid sharing towels at home
- You should keep your child off school or nursery while they are feeling unwell
- Once they are feeling better they can go back and there is no need to wait until all the blisters have healed. It is best to let the school or nursery know.

How to stop hand foot and mouth disease spreading?

Hand, foot and mouth disease is easily passed on to other people. It's spread in coughs, sneezes and poo.

You're infectious from a few days before you have any symptoms, but you're most likely to give it to others in the first 5 days after symptoms start.

To reduce the risk of spreading hand, foot and mouth disease:

- wash your hands often with warm soapy water – and teach children to do so
- use tissues to trap germs when you cough or sneeze
- bin used tissues as quickly as possible
- don't share towels or household items – like cups or cutlery
- wash soiled bedding and clothing on a hot wash