

HAND, FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

What is hand, foot and mouth disease?

Hand, foot and mouth disease is a contagious disease caused by a coxsackievirus. While anyone at any age can get it, it is most common in children under 10 years of age. Most cases occur during the summer and early fall. Hand, foot and mouth disease is different from the foot and mouth disease that causes infection in animals.

What are the symptoms of hand, foot and mouth Disease

Hand, foot and mouth disease is usually a mild infection that mostly affects young children. It starts with a fever, and after one or two days, small, painful blisters appear in the mouth. These blisters are usually inside the cheeks, on the gums and on the sides of the tongue. They can make swallowing painful, which might cause dehydration because it hurts to drink water.

A rash also appears on the hands and feet, making it difficult for the child to eat or drink. Blisters might also appear on the palms, fingers, soles of the feet and sometimes on the buttocks. These blisters do not itch and usually last for seven to 10 days.

Other symptoms can include headache, vomiting, diarrhea, sore throat, loss of appetite and feeling tired. Sometimes, people can have the disease without any symptoms at all. Hand, foot and mouth disease is not a serious illness and complications are rare.

How does hand, foot and mouth disease spread?

Hand, foot and mouth disease spreads in several ways through:

- **Touching** an infected person's saliva, mucus or fluid from blisters, then touching your own eyes, nose or mouth
- **Breathing** in droplets from an infected person when they cough, sneeze or talk
- **Touching contaminated secretions**, such as an infected child's stool when assisting with toileting or changing diapers
- **Touching contaminated objects or surfaces**, such as toys, tables, taps or door handles, and then touching your face
- Having **close contact** with an infected person by kissing, hugging or sharing cups and eating utensils

After coming into contact with an infected person, it usually takes three to five days for symptoms to appear. The disease is most contagious during the first week. However, the virus can remain contagious for several weeks, as the virus may be present in the stool for weeks.

When can children return to child care centre or school?

Since symptoms are typically mild, children can continue attending their child care centre and school if:

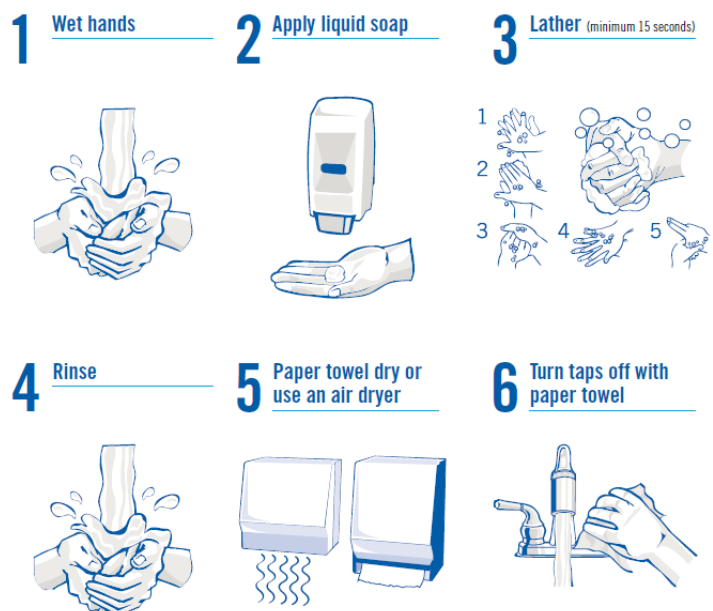
- They have no fever
- Feel well enough to participate in classes and activities
- Have no uncontrolled drooling with mouth sores

Talk with your child's healthcare provider if you are still unsure when they can return.

How can hand, foot and mouth disease be prevented?

There is no vaccine to prevent hand, foot and mouth disease. If your child coming into contact with someone who has the disease, you should watch your child for symptoms. To help prevent catching or spreading hand, foot and mouth disease:

- **Wash your hands** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after wiping your child's nose, changing a diaper, using the washroom, and before preparing or eating food
- **Help children wash their hands** and keep blisters clean
- **Avoid touching your face** with unwashed hands, especially your eyes, nose and mouth
- **Carefully throw away or clean** items contaminated by an infected child's nose and throat or stool
- **Clean and disinfect** all common toys and surfaces. Clean and disinfect diaper change area after each diaper change
- **Avoid sharing items** such as cups, glasses and utensils with an infected person
- **Avoid close contact** with an infected person, such as hugging or kissing them



How is hand, foot and mouth disease treated?

There is no specific treatment for this disease. Symptoms may be relieved with the use of medication.