

# HAND FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

**Hand Foot and Mouth Disease** *Information from UpToDate and other sources*

## What is hand, foot, and mouth disease?

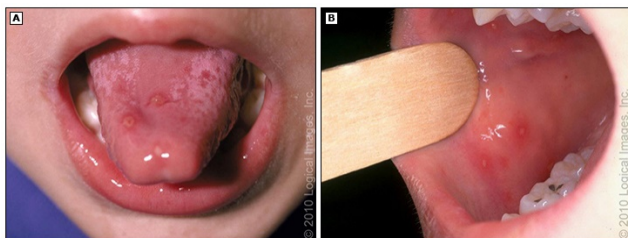
Hand, foot, and mouth disease is an infection that causes sores to form in the mouth, and on the hands, feet, buttocks, and sometimes the genitals. It most often affects children, but adults can get it too.

***Hand, foot, and mouth disease usually improves on its own within 3 to 5 days.***

***ER Evaluation is generally NOT needed.***

## What are the symptoms of hand, foot, and mouth disease?

The main symptom is sores that form in or around the mouth, and on the hands, feet, buttocks, and sometimes the genitals. They can look like small red spots, bumps, or blisters. The sores in the mouth can make swallowing painful. The sores on the hands and feet might be painful. It is possible to get the sores only in some areas. Not every person gets them on their hands, feet, and mouth. The infection sometimes causes fever.



## How does hand, foot, and mouth disease spread?

The virus that causes hand, foot, and mouth disease can travel in body fluids of an infected person. For example, the virus can be found in:

- Mucus from the nose
- Saliva
- Fluid from one of the sores
- Traces of bowel movements

People with hand, foot, and mouth disease are most likely to spread the infection during the first week of their illness. But the virus can live in their body for weeks or even months after the symptoms have gone away.

## Is there a test for hand, foot, and mouth disease?

Yes, but it is not usually necessary. The doctor or nurse should be able to tell if your child has it by learning about your child's symptoms and doing an exam.

## Should I call my child's doctor or nurse?

***ER Evaluation is generally NOT needed.***

You should call us if your child is looking tired and drinking poorly without much urine (dehydration). Come for an appointment if getting worse or isn't getting better after a 4 - 5 days.

### [How is hand, foot, and mouth disease treated?](#)

The infection itself is not treated. It usually goes away on its own. But children who are in pain can take nonprescription medicines such as acetaminophen (sample brand name: Tylenol) or ibuprofen (sample brand names: Advil, Motrin) to relieve pain. Never give aspirin to a child younger than 18 years. In children, aspirin can cause a serious problem called Reye syndrome.

The sores in the mouth can make swallowing painful, so some children might not want to eat or drink. It is important to make sure that children get enough fluids so that they don't get dehydrated. Cold foods, like popsicles and ice cream, can help to numb the pain. Soft foods, like pudding and gelatin, might be easier to swallow.

### [Can hand, foot, and mouth disease be prevented?](#)

Yes. The most important thing you can do to prevent the spread of this infection is to wash your hands often with soap and water, even after your child is feeling better. You should teach your children to wash often, especially after using the bathroom. It's also important to keep your home clean and to disinfect tabletops, toys, and other things that a child might touch.

If your child has hand, foot, and mouth disease, keep him or her out of school or day care if he or she has a fever or doesn't feel well enough to go. You should also keep your child home if he or she is drooling a lot or has open sores.