

Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease

Brief Version

What is hand, foot and mouth disease?

Your child may have hand, foot, and mouth disease, if your child has:

- Small, painful sores in his mouth.
- Small water blisters or red spots on the palms of his hands and soles of the feet. You may also see these on the webs between the fingers and toes.
- Five or fewer blisters on each hand or foot
- Low-grade fever between 100°F and 102°F

This happens most often in children 6 months to 4 years old.

A virus causes this disease. The fever goes away by the 3rd or 4th day. The mouth sores go away in 7 days. The rash on the hands and feet can last 10 days.

How can I take care of my child?

Helping the pain.

- If your child is very young, put 1/2 teaspoon antacid solution in the front of the mouth four times a day after meals.
- Children over age 4 can use 1 teaspoon of an antacid solution as a mouthwash after meals.
- Give acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) if your child's mouth really hurts, or for fever over 102° F. No aspirin.

Feeding your child.

- Give soft foods, like yogurt, cottage cheese, and Jell-O.
- Use a cup instead of a bottle.
- Cold drinks, milkshakes, Popsicles, and sherbet can feel good.
- Stay away from citrus, salty, or spicy foods.

Spreading hand, foot, and mouth disease.

- Your child's playmates may get the disease in 3 to 6 days.
- Your child may go back to school when the fever goes away.

Call your child's doctor right away if:

- Your child has not urinated for more than 8 hours.
- Your child acts very sick.

Call your child's doctor during office hours if:

- The fever lasts more than 3 days.
- You have other concerns or questions.

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This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.