



Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (Coxsackie Virus)

Patient and Family Education

What is hand, foot and mouth disease?

Hand, foot and mouth disease is a mild infection caused by a virus. It causes ulcers in the mouth and blisters on the hands and feet. The fluid in the blisters contains the virus. The virus can be spread through saliva in the mouth, from touching the hands or feet, or from the infected person's bowel movements.

Hand, foot and mouth disease is common in young children from 6 months to 4 years but can occur in older children. Since it is caused by a virus, antibiotics are not helpful. This is not the same as hand, foot and mouth disease in cows, sheep and pigs.

What are the possible symptoms?

Your child may have one or more of the following:

- Sore throat
- Temperature above 100.3°F for up to four days
- Small ulcers in the mouth
- Small water blisters on the palms of the hands, soles of the feet, and between the fingers and toes
- Headache
- Stomach pain
- Refusal to eat or drink

How long does it last?

The fever and discomfort are usually gone by the third or fourth day. The mouth ulcers are gone by the seventh day. The rash on the hands and feet can last up to 10 days.

What is the treatment?

Your child's doctor will talk with you about specific care for your child. Some general guidelines to follow include:

- If advised by your child's doctor and if your child cooperates, make a mixture of Benadryl® and Maalox® or Mylanta®
 - This mixture is made with equal parts of each medicine. It may be painted on the sores in the mouth with a cotton swab as needed.
 - Older children may gargle it up to four times a day.
 - Do not use more medicine than recommended on the label.
- Some over-the-counter medicines may also help. Ask your child's doctor or local pharmacist for more information.
- Give your child:
 - Acetaminophen (Tylenol®, Tempra®, Panadol®) or ibuprofen (Motrin®, Pediaprofen®, Advil®) may be given for fever or pain. Follow the directions on the box carefully or ask your doctor how much medicine to give.
 - Do not give your child more than 5 doses of acetaminophen in a 24-hour period.
 - Do not give acetaminophen to babies less than 3 months of age without a doctor's order.
 - Do not give ibuprofen to babies less than 6 months of age without a doctor's order.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room right away.

This is general information and is not specific medical advice for your child. Always consult your child's doctor or other healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns about the care or health of your child. A Children's Healthcare of Atlanta pediatric advice nurse is available 24 hours a day at 404-250-KIDS.

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease, continued

- A soft, bland diet - stay away from acidic, salty or spicy foods
- Small, frequent sips of liquid
- Medicines as ordered by your child's doctor

How can I stop the spread of infection?

- Wash your hands often, especially after caring for your child
- Do not share drinking glasses or utensils
- Dispose of any used tissues
- Keep your child at home until his temperature has been normal for 24 hours

When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's doctor if:

- He has persistent lethargy or irritability (does not smile or show interest in play for at least a few minutes during any four-hour period)
- The fever lasts for more than four days
- He has any new symptoms
- His mouth pain becomes severe
- Signs of dehydration (drying out) occur:
 - No urine in six to eight hours in an infant younger than 1 year old
 - No urine in more than eight hours in a child older than 1 year old
 - No tears when crying
 - Sunken eyes
 - Dry lips and mouth
- You have any questions or concerns about how your child looks or feels.

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