

Self Care - Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease

What is hand, foot & mouth disease?

Hand, foot and mouth disease is a common, mild illness caused by a virus. It gets its name because of the parts of the body it affects. Symptoms begin with fever and a sore throat and you may feel generally unwell. Blister-like spots then develop in your mouth and later on the palms of your hands and soles of your feet. It is most common in children under 10 years of age, but anyone can be affected. The virus is easily spread.

It is not related to foot and mouth disease in animals.

How long does it last?

Generally, hand, foot and mouth disease is a mild and short-lasting illness. Treatment is usually not needed as the body's immune system clears the virus and symptoms go away after about 7 to 10 days.

What can I do to help?

You can help the symptoms by:

- Resting
- Drinking plenty of fluids (water or weak squash are ideal)
- If you or your child has a fever or sore throat, paracetamol should relieve pain and bring down a temperature. Children's paracetamol or paracetamol syrup can be used to treat your child. These are available at low cost from your Pharmacist or supermarket.

Prevent the spread of infection to others by:

- Always washing your hands after going to the toilet and handling nappies, and before preparing food. If your child has hand, foot and mouth disease, make sure they wash their hands regularly as well
- Avoid sharing cutlery with people who are infected with hand, foot and mouth disease
- Make sure that work surfaces are clean
- If you child has hand, foot and mouth disease, keep them off school or nursery while they are feeling poorly. They can go back to school when the blisters have gone.

Source NHS choices

If you would like further advice contact NHS Direct on 08454647 or see www.nhs.uk



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