

Hand-Foot-Mouth Disease

This is a common childhood illness with symptoms of mouth sores, fever, and a rash on the hands and feet. Occurs more commonly in the late summer and early fall of the year. Most often this illness occurs in infants, toddlers and young children.

Hand-foot-mouth disease (also called herpangina) is caused by a virus, called the coxsackievirus, and so is not treated by antibiotics. Children with hand-foot-mouth usually start to feel bad 3-7 days after being exposed to the virus. A decrease in the child's appetite is usually one of the first symptoms, and the child may also have a fever and sore throat. A day or two later, the child may develop sores in the mouth which start as small red spots on the tongue, gums, or other surfaces of the mouth. A skin rash may also develop over a day or two, and usually more prominent on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. The rash may extend on up the legs, and up to the buttocks. The rash is raised red spots, often forming shallow water blisters on the palms and soles, which can be tender, however the rash of hand-foot-mouth disease does not itch. Although the fever usually only lasts 3-4 days, the mouth sores can last 7 days, and the rash on hands and feet can last up to 10 days. Many children with this illness do not have all the features, some may have no rash, some have no mouth sores, and some have no fever.

This illness is treated by relieving the pain with Tylenol® or ibuprofen (ibuprofen only for children over six months old), and closely watching the child's hydration. Cold liquids, popsicles, slushies or ice cream can help soothe the sore throat and can keep the child hydrated. For infants, give fluids by cup, spoon or syringe rather than bottle as the nipple can cause pain. Avoid citrus, salty and spicy foods.

WHEN TO CALL:

- If high fever is not relieved by medication
- If fever does not resolve after 72 hours
- If signs or symptoms of dehydration are seen: no urination for 12 hours or longer; no tears when crying; dry mouth; excessive drowsiness; sunken soft spot in infants



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