

# Health Office Fact Sheet



## Hand, Foot & Mouth Disease

Here's yet another reason to encourage kids to wash their hands: it can help prevent the spread of hand, foot, and mouth (HFMD) disease. HFMD disease is caused by two highly contagious — though usually not serious — viruses, coxsackievirus and enterovirus.

These viruses live in the body's digestive tract and spread from person to person, usually on unwashed hands and surfaces contaminated by faeces. Children aged 1 to 4 are most prone to the disease; cases are often found in day care centres, pre-schools, and other places where children congregate.

Outbreaks usually occur during the warm summer and early Autumn months, though they can happen year-round in tropical parts of the world.

### Signs and Symptoms

HFMD disease — not to be confused with hoof and mouth disease, a totally unrelated illness that affects barnyard animals and livestock — causes painful blisters in the throat, tongue, gums, hard palate, or inside the cheeks. The soles of the feet and the palms of the hands also may be affected.

Blisters are red with a small bubble of fluid on top. Occasionally, a pink rash may be seen on other parts of the body, such as the buttocks and thighs. However, some children with HFMD disease develop no symptoms at all, or, if they do, may only have sores in the back of the throat.

It can be hard for a parent to tell if a child (especially a pre-verbal child) has HFMD disease if sores are only inside the mouth or throat. Very young children may not be able to complain of a sore throat, but if a child stops eating or drinking, or wants to eat or drink less often, it should send a signal to parents that something is wrong.

A child may also:

- develop fever, muscle aches, or other flu-like symptoms
- become irritable or sleep more than usual
- begin drooling (due to painful swallowing)
- gravitate toward cold fluids

### Treatment

If your child is continually irritable or refusing food or drink, it's time to see the doctor. While there is no medical cure for HFMD disease (the illness really just needs to run its course), the doctor may be able to recommend home health remedies to make your child more comfortable during recovery.

This information was taken from - [www.kidshealth.com](http://www.kidshealth.com)

For more information re on Hand, Foot and Mouth disease the following web sites may be of use:

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/infectious/handfootmouth.html>

[http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/submenus/sub\\_hfmd.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/submenus/sub_hfmd.htm)[http://hcd2.bupa.co.uk/fact\\_sheets/html/hand\\_foot\\_mouth\\_disease.html](http://hcd2.bupa.co.uk/fact_sheets/html/hand_foot_mouth_disease.html)