

## When to get medical advice

You don't usually need medical attention if you think you or your child has hand, foot and mouth disease. The infection will usually pass in 7 to 10 days, and there isn't much your doctor can do.

Antibiotics will not help as hand, foot and mouth disease is caused by a virus.

You should also get medical advice if:

- Your child is unable or unwilling to drink any fluids;
- Your child has signs of dehydration such as unresponsiveness, passing small amounts of urine or no urine at all or cold hands and feet;
- Your child develops fits (seizures), confusion, weakness or a loss of consciousness;
- Your child is under three months old and has a temperature of 36°C (101°F) or above, or is between three and six months old and has a temperature of 39°C (102°F) or above;
- The skin becomes very painful, red, swollen and hot, or there's a discharge of pus;
- The symptoms are getting worse or haven't improved after 7 to 10 days.

Infection in pregnancy is usually nothing to worry about, but there's a small chance it could make your baby ill if you're infected shortly before you give birth.

## How Can I Learn More?

Ask your Doctor or

Contact your local

Health Centre:

George Town	244 2648
West Bay	949 3439
Eastern Districts	947 2299
Faith Hospital	948 2242

\*Source: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

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**Public Health Department**  
**HEALTH SERVICES AUTHORITY**  
CAYMAN ISLANDS  
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## Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease

### What You Need To Know



Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease

## 1. What is Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease?

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease is a common infection that causes mouth ulcers and spots on the hands and feet.

It's most common in young children—particularly those under 10—but can affect older children and adults as well. Hand, Foot and Mouth disease can be unpleasant, but it will clear up by itself within 7 to 10 days. You can normally look after yourself or your child at home.

**The infection is not related to foot and mouth disease, which affect cattle, sheep and pigs.**

## 2. How do you get it?

Someone with hand, foot and mouth disease is most infectious from just before their symptoms start until they're feeling better. The infection can be spread by close person to person contact with contaminated surfaces. The virus is found in:

- **Droplets in the cough and sneezes of an infected person**—you can become infected if you get these on your hands and then touch your mouth or if you breathe in the droplets.
- **An infected person's stool** – if an infected person doesn't wash their hands properly after going to the toilet, they can contaminate food or surfaces.

- **Saliva or fluid from an infected person's blisters**—you can become infected if you come into contact with it.

## 3. What should I expect?

The symptoms of hand, foot and mouth disease usually develop between three and five days after being exposed to the infection.

The first symptoms may include:

- A high temperature (fever), usually around 38°C—39°C (100.4°F—102.2°F)
- A general sense of feeling unwell
- Loss of appetite
- Coughing
- Abdominal (tummy) pain
- A sore throat and mouth

### Mouth Ulcers

After one or two days, red spots appear on the tongue and inside the mouth.

These quickly develop into larger yellow-grey **mouth ulcers** with red edges.

The ulcers can be painful and make eating, drinking and swallowing difficult. They should pass within a week.

### Spotty Rash and Blisters

Soon after the mouth ulcers appear, you'll probably notice a rash made up of small, raised red spots on the skin.

These typically develop on the fingers, the back or palms of the hand, the soles of the feet, and occasionally on the buttocks and groin.

The spots may then turn into small **blisters** with a grey center.

The spots and blisters can sometimes be itchy or uncomfortable and typically last up to 10 days.



## 4. Preventing Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease

It's not possible to avoid getting hand, foot and mouth disease, but following the advice below can help minimize the spread of the infection.

- **Stay away from work, school or nursery until you or your child are feeling better** usually within 7–10 days.
- **Use tissues to cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze** and put used tissues in a bin as soon as possible.
- **Wash your hands with soap and water often** particularly after going to the toilet, sneezing or handling nappies and before preparing food.
- **Avoid sharing cups, utensils, towels and clothes** with people who are infected.
- **Disinfect surfaces or objects that could be contaminated** it is best to use a bleach-based household cleaner.
- **Wash any bedding or clothes that could have become contaminated** separately on a hot wash.