

Hand Foot and Mouth is a common childhood illness, caused by a virus called Coxsackie. It is usually a mild infection that does not need specific treatment and will usually get better on its own. Antibiotics will not help.

When should you worry?

If your child has any of the following:

- If your child has any of the following:
- Has a rash that does not go away with pressure (see the 'Glass Test')
- Swollen lips or tongue and struggling to breathe
- Breathing very fast, too breathless to talk, eat or drink
- Working hard to breathe, drawing in of the muscles below the ribs, or noisy breathing (grunting)
- Breathing that stops or pauses
- Is pale, blue, mottled or feels unusually cold to touch
- Difficult to wake up, very sleepy or confused
- Weak, high-pitched cry or can't be settled
- Has a fit (seizure)
- Is under 3 months old with temperature more than 38°C or under 36°C (unless fever in the 48 hours following vaccinations and no other red features)



RED

Your child needs urgent help

please phone 999 or go to the nearest hospital emergency (A+E) department

If your child has any of the following:

- Increasing pain and redness between the spots
- Symptoms do not improve after 10 days
- Breathing a bit faster than normal or working a bit harder to breathe
- Dry skin, lips or tongue
- Not had a wee or wet nappy in last 8 hours
- Poor feeding in babies (less than half of their usual amount)
- Irritable (Unable to settle them with toys, TV, food or hugs even after their fever has come down)
- Is 3-6 months old with temperature 39°C or above (unless fever in the 48 hours following vaccinations and no other red or amber features)
- Temperature of 38°C or above for more than 5 days or shivering with fever (rigors)
- Temperature less than 36°C in those over 3 months
- Getting worse or you are worried about them



AMBER

You need to contact a doctor or nurse today

Please ring your GP surgery or contact NHS 111 - dial 111 or for children aged 5 years and above visit 111.nhs.uk

If symptoms persist for 4 hours or more and you have not been able to speak to either a member of staff from your GP practice or to NHS 111 staff, recheck that your child has not developed any red features

If none of the above features are present

- Most children with fever and rash can be safely managed at home
- Watch them closely for any change and look out for any red or amber symptoms
- [Additional advice is also available to young families for coping with crying of well babies.](#)
- If your child has a long term condition or disability and you are worried please contact your regular team or follow any plans that they have given you.
- If you think that this is a worsening of your child's eczema, please look at the [eczema page](#) or contact your GP or practice nurse.



Self care

Continue providing your child's care at home. If you are still concerned about your child, call NHS 111 – dial 111

What should you do?

- Seeing your child unwell with hand foot and mouth disease can be very distressing for a parent and while there is no treatment for the virus itself there are simple things you can do to make your child more comfortable:
- Get them to drink plenty of fluids and try ice lollies if your child is not drinking much
- Try soft foods like soup, yoghurt or ice cream. Avoid hot and spicy foods as these may be painful on ulcers in the mouth
- Speak with your local community pharmacist for advice about treatments, such as mouth ulcer gels, sprays and mouthwashes to relieve pain.
- Paracetamol or ibuprofen for temperature or pain
- While there is normally no risk to pregnant people it is best to avoid close contact if possible
- You can't take antibiotics or medicines to cure hand, foot and mouth disease. It has to run its course. It usually gets better in 7 to 10 days.

How long will your child's symptoms last?

- Hand foot and mouth disease usually lasts 7 to 10 days
- It is easy to spread for first 5 days (it is spread in sneezes, coughing and poo)
- Wash your hands often and avoid sharing towels at home
- You should keep your child off school or nursery while they are feeling unwell
- Once they are feeling better they can go back and there is no need to wait until all the blisters have healed. It is best to let the school or nursery know.

How to stop hand foot and mouth disease spreading?

- Hand, foot and mouth disease is easily passed on to other people. It's spread when people cough or sneeze and in poo.
- You're infectious from a few days before you have any symptoms, but you're most likely to give it to others in the first 5 days after symptoms start.
- To reduce the risk of spreading hand, foot and mouth disease:
- wash your hands often with warm soapy water and teach children to do so
- use tissues to trap germs when you cough or sneeze
- bin used tissues as quickly as possible
- don't share towels or household items like cups or cutlery
- wash soiled bedding and clothing on a hot wash