
Hand, foot & mouth disease



Saint John Regional Hospital
Department of Emergency Medicine

Advice for parents

What is hand, foot and mouth disease?

It is an infection that leads to painful sores in the mouth, on the hands, feet, buttocks, and sometimes the genitals. The infection also usually causes a fever.

How long will this take to go away?

Hand, foot, and mouth disease usually goes away on its own within 2 to 3 days.

Is hand, foot and mouth contagious?

Yes, the virus can be found in: saliva, snot, and fluid from the sores. The infection is most contagious during the first week of the illness, ***so children should be kept away from other people during the first week of the illness.***

Is there a test to confirm that it is hand, foot & mouth?

The Physician or Nurse Practitioner who sees your child will be able to tell you whether without a blood test or swab.

What is the treatment for hand, foot & mouth?

The infection itself does not need treatment; it goes away on its own within a few days. The pain from the sores can be treated with Ibuprofen (brand name Advil, Motrin) or Acetaminophen (brand name Tylenol). Also, the sores in the mouth can make eating and drinking painful, so parents need to make extra sure that children get enough fluids so that they don't get dehydrated. Cold foods, like popsicles and ice-cream, can help numb the pain. Soft foods, like pudding and applesauce, might be easier to swallow.

Can hand, foot & mouth be prevented?

The best way to prevent the spread of this infection is to wash hands often with soap and water. Again, keep your child away from other people during the first week of his illness.