



A guide to...

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease *Patient Information*

Children's Emergency Department (CED)

Watford General Hospital



Caring for your child with hand, foot and mouth disease

Your child has been diagnosed with hand, foot and mouth.

We are happy that your child is well enough to be taken home under your supervision.

What is it?

Hand, Foot and Mouth is a common viral illness which is caused by a number of different organisms. This means you can get it more than once. It mainly affects children under 10 years old. It causes ulcers, blister type spots on the hands and feet as well as a widespread rash over the body and groin area.

It is NOT related to Foot and Mouth disease which affects cattle, sheep and pigs.

Normal Symptoms

Usually develop between three to five days after exposure to the infection:

- Fever — often around 38-39°C
- Generally feeling unwell
- Reduced feeding / oral intake
- Coughing
- Abdominal pain
- A sore throat and mouth.

After one to two days:

- Red spots may appear on the tongue and inside the mouth; these can develop into larger mouth ulcers causing pain and potentially making eating and drinking difficult. They should heal within one week.
- Soon after, a rash made up of small, red, raised spots may appear. These are typically seen on the fingers, palms of hands, soles of feet, buttocks and groin area. These may turn into blisters which can be itchy and uncomfortable; they generally last up to 10 days.

How does it spread?

Someone with the virus is most infectious from just before the symptoms start until they are feeling better. The infection can be spread by close person to person contact and with contaminated surfaces.

The virus is found in:

- Droplets in the coughs and sneezes of an infected person
- An infected person's poo
- An infected person's saliva, or fluid from their blisters.

Prevention

To help reduce spread of this virus:

- Use tissues to cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, and then dispose of these into a bin or toilet
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water
- Avoid sharing cups, utensils, towels and clothes
- Disinfect any surfaces or objects that could be contaminated
- Wash any bedding or clothing that could have become contaminated separately on a hot wash

Red Flag (worrying) Symptoms

- Your child is unable to drink any fluids
- Signs of dehydration including significant reduction in urine output
- Reduced responsiveness
- Fits, confusion, weakness or a loss of consciousness
- Your child is under three months old and has a temperature of 38°C or above, or is between three to six months and has a temperature of 39°C or above
- Skin becomes very painful, red, swollen and hot, or if there is discharge or pus
- Symptoms are worsening or not improved after 10 days.

Care of your child

Most children can be managed at home under the supervision of their parent / carer.

- Rest
- Encourage oral intake, especially fluids
- Offer soft foods (avoid hot, spicy or acidic foods)
- Treat painful symptoms with paracetamol or ibuprofen, if age appropriate and recommended by your clinician. Talk to your local pharmacist who may be able to provide your child with an oral anaesthetic spray to help with painful mouth ulcers.

There is no treatment for Hand, Foot and Mouth and although it can be unpleasant, it usually resolves within seven to 10 days.

If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01923 217 187** or email **westherts.pals@nhs.uk**



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