

Coxsackievirus Quicksheet

December 2025

Background

Coxsackievirus, also known as hand, foot, mouth disease (HFMD), is most common in children younger than 5, but anyone can contract it. While the illness is not typically serious, it is **very contagious** spreading quickly at schools and early childhood education centers.

Symptoms

Hand, foot, mouth symptoms are pretty distinct from other forms of rash. People who have HFMD often feel some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Mouth sores
- Difficulty swallowing
- Drooling more than usual
- Blister-like rash on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet
 - The rash is usually not itchy and looks like flat or slightly raised red spots

How HFMD Spreads

HFMD spreads from direct person-to-person contact, **typically on unwashed hands and surfaces contaminated with feces (poop)**. HFMD can live on surfaces for several days.

Symptoms typically begin 3 to 5 days after a person catches the HFMD virus.

How Contagious is HFMD

HFMD is **very contagious**. Individuals with HFMD are **most contagious during the first week** that they are sick. Most children have symptoms lasting 7 to 10 days.

HFMD can spread quickly in group settings such as schools, ECEs, and camps.

Prevention

- Wash your hands often, especially after changing diapers and using the toilet
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, including toys
- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing
- Avoid close contact with sick people

When to stay home

Children with HFMD should stay home from school or ECEs until:

- They are fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication
- They have no uncontrolled drooling with mouth sores
- They have no diarrhea
- Their lesions are healing

