

Hand-Foot-Mouth Disease

Hand-foot-mouth disease, also sometimes called herpangina, is a common childhood illness consisting of mouth sores, fever and a rash. Caused by coxsackievirus, hand-foot-mouth disease is a benign, short-lived viral infection. Most cases of hand-foot-mouth disease are in infants, toddlers and young children, and most cases occur in the summer or early fall.

Children with hand-foot-mouth disease usually start to feel bad 3 to 7 days after being exposed to the virus. Parents may notice a decrease in a child's appetite as one of the first symptoms. They may also have fever and a sore throat. A day or two later, many children develop sores in the mouth which begin as small red spots on the tongue, gums or other surfaces of the mouth.

A skin rash may also develop over a day or two and is usually most prominent on the palms and soles, but may also extend up the legs and onto the buttocks. The rash consists of flat or raised red spots, often forming shallow water blisters on the palms and soles which can be tender. The rash of hand-foot-mouth disease does not itch. Fever usually resolves by day 3 or 4 of the illness, whereas oral ulcers can last 7 days, and the hand/foot rash can last up to 10 days. Many children with hand-foot-mouth disease do not have all of the features – some may have no rash, some may have no mouth sores, and some may have no fever.

Treatment consists of pain relief and close monitoring of hydration status. Antibiotics do not help with hand-foot-mouth disease. Cold liquids, popsicles, slushies or ice cream will often help soothe a sore throat and these can also help keep a child hydrated. Avoid giving citrus, salty or spicy foods. Soft foods are better than foods requiring much chewing. Ibuprofen or acetaminophen can be given for severe mouth pain or fever. Do not give your child aspirin.

Hand-foot-mouth disease can be prevented by good hand-washing, especially after diapering/toileting and before eating. Children are often kept out of school or daycare for the first several days of the illness, but it is not clear that this prevents others from being infected. It is generally recommended to keep kids with hand-foot-mouth at home until fever has returned to normal range.

It should be noted that similar-sounding “foot-and-mouth disease” or “hoof-and-mouth disease” is a disease of cattle and is not related to this condition.

When to call:

- If high fever is not reduced by medication
- If fever doesn't resolve after 72 hours
- If signs or symptoms of dehydration are seen: No urination for 12 hours or longer; No tears present when crying; Dry mouth; Excessive drowsiness; Sunken soft spot in infants



303 South 4th Street
Danville, Kentucky 40422
Phone 859•236•1080
Phone 859•236•1089
Fax 859•236•1862
www.danvillepediatrics.com

Danville
PediatricsSM
and Primary Care