

# Hand, foot and mouth

**This leaflet offers more information about hand, foot and mouth disease. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your child's care.**

## What is hand, foot and mouth disease and why has my child got it?

Hand, foot and mouth is a common childhood condition that can also affect adults. It is often caused by the coxsackie virus and causes a mild illness in most children. The illness usually clears up by itself in 7-10 days.

## What are the signs and symptoms?

The first symptoms of hand, foot and mouth are:

- Sore throat
- High temperature above 38 degrees
- Not wanting to eat and drink.

A few days after the temperature, ulcers appear in the mouth and a rash appears on hands, feet and sometimes thighs and bottom. The rash starts as spots which can be red, pink or darker than your normal skin tone. The spots then develop into blisters. The blisters are grey or lighter than your normal skin tone and can be painful. Painful blisters in the mouth can make it difficult to eat and drink.

Children younger than five years old may get worse symptoms than older children and adults.

## Does my child need any tests to confirm the diagnosis?

The diagnosis is made by a doctor or other medical practitioner who can recognise hand, foot and mouth from the rash your child has and the history given by yourselves.

## What treatments are available?

You cannot take antibiotics or other medicines to cure hand, foot and mouth. It has to run its course and gets better on its own in 7-10 days.

## Is there anything I can do to help my child?

There are some ways you can help your child feel better.

- Encourage lots of fluids to stop them getting dehydrated. Avoid acidic drinks.
- Use paracetamol and Ibuprofen to help with the pain.
- Try soft or liquid foods like soup and ice cream.
- Speak to a pharmacist about sprays and gels to help reduce the pain from mouth ulcers.

## How to stop Hand, foot and Mouth disease spreading?

Hand, foot and mouth is very contagious which means it is easily passed from one person to another. It is spread by coughing, sneezing and in faeces (poo). You can spread it a few days before you have symptoms, but you are most likely to pass it on a few days after symptoms started. To try to stop giving it to another person you can ask your child to:

- Sneeze and cough into a tissue
- Wash their hands after going to the toilet, coughing or sneezing
- Bin used tissues as quickly as possible.

## Nursery, Childcare and Pregnant Contacts

You should keep your child off nursery or school while they are unwell with a fever. Once they are feeling better, they can go back to nursery or school. There is no need to wait until the spots have gone. Some nurseries do allow children to come in with hand, foot and mouth. Please clarify with your individual nursery/childcare provider.

Hand, foot and mouth doesn't normally cause any problems to pregnant women or unborn babies. However, if you are pregnant it is best to avoid contact with someone with hand, foot and mouth. This is because

- A high temperature in early pregnancy, can rarely cause a miscarriage
- If you get hand, foot and mouth at the end of pregnancy, there is a small chance your baby could be born with a mild case of hand, foot and mouth.

## When to see a doctor

- Your symptoms or your child's symptoms do not improve after 7 to 10 days.
- You're worried about your child's symptoms.
- Your child is dehydrated – they're not weeing as often as usual i.e., less than half the normal number of times / less than half the normal number of wet nappies.
- You're pregnant and get hand, foot and mouth disease.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)

## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111

### AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website ([www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)).

The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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