



Hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD)

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Key facts

Transmission: Direct contact and droplet-borne

- Contact with the saliva, nose mucous, blister fluid or faeces of an infected person
- Breathing in droplets after an infected person coughs or sneezes
- Touching objects and surfaces that have the virus on them (toys, utensils, doorknobs)
- Swallowing infected, improperly treated water from swimming pool (rare occurrence)

Most vulnerable to severe consequences

- Infants and children younger than five years of age
- Adults with weakened immune systems

Most vulnerable to contracting the disease

- People living, working or going to school in shared, cramped spaces

Symptoms

- Fever
- Reduced desire to eat and drink
- Feeling tired and unwell
- Sore throat
- Mouth sores (usually appear a few days after other symptoms)

- Skin rash with red spots on the palms of the hands and bottoms of the feet
 - Rash may also appear on the knees, elbows, buttocks, or genital area

What can you do to prevent and control an epidemic?

Monitoring the community and identifying sick people

- Identify and isolate sick people before they spread the disease to others

Treatment and management

- Refer severely ill people (for example, those with severe dehydration) to health facilities
- Provide psychosocial support to the sick person and their family members

Appropriate sanitation and waste management

- Promote recommended environmental hygiene and cleaning practices
 - Clean and disinfect surfaces that are touched frequently and dirty items, including toys
- Promote use of appropriate sanitation facilities (sound, clean latrines)

Hand and respiratory hygiene

- Promote handwashing with soap (by both caregivers and children)
 - BEFORE: preparing food; eating; feeding a child; treating wounds; or caring for sick people
 - AFTER: using the toilet or cleaning a baby; touching garbage or waste; touching or feeding animals; blowing nose, coughing or sneezing; treating wounds; or caring for sick people
- Promote respiratory hygiene and coughing etiquette (cover cough or sneeze using a sleeve or tissue, wash hands after coughing or sneezing, do not spit onto the ground or in public)

Food and water hygiene and safety

- Ensure access to safe, clean drinking water
- Encourage exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, and complementary breastfeeding until the age of two years (especially when a child is sick)

Social mobilization and health promotion

- Find out the specific advice being given by health and other relevant authorities
- Model following this advice and inform community members of current health practice advice
- Offer support and encouragement to follow the advice
 - Try to gain understanding about if and why health practice advice is not being followed
 - With the guidance of your supervisor and health authorities, work with communities to overcome barriers to following health advice and recommended practices

Mapping and community assessment

- Make a map of the community.
- Mark the following information on the map:
 - How many people have fallen sick with HFMD? Where?
 - How many people have died? Where? When?
 - Who and where are the vulnerable people?
 - Where are the local health facilities and services? (include traditional healers)
 - Where do people obtain their drinking water?
- Record the following information on the back of the map:
 - When did people start to fall sick with HFMD?
 - How many people live in the affected community? How many are children under five years?
 - Is breastfeeding common?
 - Is the water source safe?
 - Do people do anything to treat their water?
 - Do people know how to treat water?
 - How do they do it?
 - What sanitation facilities are available? (put communal toilets/latrines on map)
 - Do people use them?
 - What handwashing facilities are available? (put communal handwashing stations on map)
 - Do they have soap?
 - What are the community's habits, practices and beliefs about caring for and feeding sick people? Consider any differences in roles and responsibilities between women and men.
 - When babies and infants are sick, do women continue to breastfeed them?
 - Where do people go for water recreation?
 - Is that water likely to be contaminated by faeces?
 - Is a social mobilization or health promotion programme in place?
 - What are the barriers people face in accessing water points and sanitation and hygiene facilities, of all gender identities, ages, disabilities and backgrounds?

- Which sources do people use/trust the most for information?
 - Are there rumours or misinformation about HFMD? What are the rumours?
- Can people identify the signs and symptoms of dehydration?
- Do people know how to make oral rehydration solution (ORS)?
 - Do they have resources at hand to make it?