

Hand, foot and mouth disease in kids

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Hand, foot and mouth disease, most commonly caused by a coxsackievirus, is a highly contagious childhood illness. The virus can be spread through respiratory droplets, person-to-person contact and touching a contaminated object.

Dr. Nipunie Rajapakse, a pediatric infectious diseases specialist at Mayo Clinic's Children's Center, says it is typically an illness of young children—usually children under 5. But you can get infected with [hand, foot and mouth disease](#) at any age.

"Hand, [foot](#) and mouth disease is spread through [respiratory droplets](#)," says Dr. Rajapakse. "It can also be spread through the stool of an infected person. That's why hand-washing is important. It can also be spread through fomites—touching something that an infected person has touched before. For that reason, we do see that it spreads pretty easily, especially in places where there's a lot of young children."

While highly contagious, the virus is usually mild.

"It can be quite painful and uncomfortable, especially the lesions of the back of the throat that can make it difficult to eat or drink," says Dr. Rajapakse.

"If they're having a lot of pain or discomfort with the rash, you can give them ibuprofen or acetaminophen to help with that, and make sure that they're staying well-hydrated, drinking lots of fluids. Things like popsicles can help if they're having a [sore throat](#)," says Dr. Rajapakse.

There are no specific treatments, but there are things you can do to help your child feel better.

Seek [medical attention](#) if your child's signs or symptoms worsen after a few days.

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