

# Tips to fight hand, foot and mouth disease from pediatric infectious disease specialist

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With an uptick in cases of hand, foot and mouth disease in the area, Loyola Medicine pediatric infectious disease specialist Nadia Qureshi, MD, offers tips to keep kids healthy as they go back to school.

"The most important prevention is good hand hygiene," Dr. Qureshi said.

Hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) is caused by a virus and it is commonly contracted by children, especially under the age of five. Like the name suggests, it appears as a rash or blisters in the mouth, on the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet.

The symptoms of HFMD are:

- Fever
- Rashes, mainly to the mouth, hands, feet and buttocks, which can blister
- Blisters to the inside of the mouth or tongue
- Sore throat
- Reduced appetite

Dr. Qureshi says she is seeing three to five children with HFMD every day at Loyola Medicine and that many parents confuse the symptoms with chickenpox.

Like HFMD, chickenpox can appear as a rash. However, the rash with chickenpox typically starts on the trunk of the body and moves outward.

Also, the [chickenpox](#) vaccine has a greater than 98 percent immunity with two doses, but there is not a vaccine for HFMD so prevention is key.

The virus is spread through saliva and by touching things. It can survive on environmental surfaces for a long period of time, making the disease especially prone to outbreaks in daycare and schools.

"Babies who have no control over their secretions and are often putting things in their mouth and touching other objects, are at the highest risk

of transmission," Dr. Qureshi said.

The best way to prevent the spread of HFMD is good [hand hygiene](#) in children and adults. Babies diagnosed with HFMD should be kept at home and schools should be notified so they can thoroughly clean the area.

There is no treatment for HFMD. The illness can last for three to six days. It is important to keep [children](#) hydrated, especially since the mouth sores can make it difficult for babies to eat and drink. Children may return to daycare or school when their fever has broken and the sores have healed.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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