

NEW MEXICO HEALTH ALERT NETWORK (HAN) ADVISORY

Recent Increases in Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease Reported by NM Schools

October 6, 2025

Background:

The New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) has received reports from schools regarding significant clusters of Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD) that are affecting communities. Although generally a benign, self-limiting illness, providers should be aware of this condition to ensure appropriate management.

HFMD is a common enteroviral illness that may include fever, sore throat, painful mouth sores that blister, and a papulovesicular skin rash on the hands and feet (sometimes also involving buttocks, legs, and arms). Complications are rare, but may include dehydration, or very rarely finger-/toenail loss, viral meningitis, or encephalitis. Lesions heal without scarring and secondary bacterial infection is unusual. It is common in children under 5 years old, but anyone can get it. HFMD is highly contagious and spreads quickly at schools and day care centers through droplets from sneezing/coughing/talking, contact with fluid from blisters, contaminated surfaces, or feces.

People with HFMD are usually most contagious during the first week that they are sick. However, people can still spread the virus to others for days or weeks after symptoms go away. They can spread it even if they have no symptoms at all. **Because HFMD is normally mild, NMDOH advises that children can continue to go to childcare or school as long as they:**

- Are fever free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication; AND
- Feel well enough to participate in class; AND
- Have no uncontrolled drooling with mouth sores

Recommendations for Clinicians:

Although most people recover on their own in 7 to 10 days with minimal treatment, symptom management can include over-the-counter medications to relieve fever and pain and drinking enough fluids to stay hydrated. Blisters should be kept clean. There is no specific antiviral treatment.

Parents are advised to have a child seen by a healthcare provider if a child:

- Cannot drink well and there are concerns about dehydration
- Has a fever that lasts longer than 3 days
- Has a weakened immune system
- Is having severe symptoms

- Has symptoms that do not improve after 10 days
- Is very young, especially younger than 6 months

HFMD can usually be diagnosed by history and exam – laboratory testing (throat or vesicle samples in viral transport medium) is not routinely recommended.

There is no vaccine in the United States to protect against the viruses that cause HFMD.

To help prevent catching or spreading HFMD, encourage patients to:

- **Wash hands often** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after changing diapers, using the toilet, and coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.
- **Help children wash their hands** and keep blisters clean.
- **Avoid touching the face** with unwashed hands, especially eyes, nose, and mouth.
- **Clean and disinfect** frequently touched surfaces and shared items, including toys and doorknobs.
- **Avoid close contact** with an infected person, such as hugging or kissing them – avoid touching blisters.

Individual cases of HFMD are not reportable to NMDOH, but clusters/outbreaks should be reported using by calling the NMDOH Helpline at (833) 796-8773 or by submitting the [Notifiable Condition Reporting Form](#).

Additional Resources:

[CDC About Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease](#)

New Mexico Health Alert Network: To register for the NM Health Alert Network, please visit the following site <https://nm.readyop.com/fs/4cjZ/10b2> Please fill out the registration form completely and click Submit at the bottom of the page, to begin receiving Important health alerts, advisories, and updates.

Please Note that our system also utilizes text messaging to notify members of important health information. Due to FCC Regulation changes that are designed to decrease the amount of unwanted spam text messages sent each year to citizens, please save, this phone number **(855) 596-1810** as the **“New Mexico Health Alert Network”** default phone number for your account used for text messages on the mobile device(s) you register with us.