



# Ministry of Health & Human Services

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## INCREASING NUMBER OF HAND, FOOT, AND MOUTH DISEASE (HFMD) CASES SEEN AT THE BELAU NATIONAL HOSPITAL

### Key Points

- Bureau of Public Health and Human Services has detected an increase in cases of hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD), a viral infection common in young children under the age of 5.
- Children with HFMD should remain at home until they have recovered to prevent further spread. Seek advice from a healthcare provider if symptoms are severe.

The Bureau of Public Health is investigating an increase in hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD) seen at the Belau National Hospital. Between February 18 – March 22, 2023, a total of 24 HFMD cases were reported through routine surveillance. Cases ranged in age from 0 – 15 years of age, with the majority under the age of 4. All cases are residents of Palau with a majority living in Koror (92%). None of the patients were hospitalized. With this, the public is urged to take preventive measures against the spread of infection.

### What is Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD):

Hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) is a mild, but highly contagious viral infection that mainly affects children below 5 years old. Infection is less common among older children and adults.

### How is it Spread?

Hand, foot, and mouth disease spreads through close personal contact, such as kissing or hugging, coughing and sneezing, contact with feces (poop), and touching objects or surfaces that have the virus on them then putting your fingers in your eyes, nose or mouth. Children 1 to 4 years old are most at risk for the disease; infections are most common in childcare centers, preschools, and other places where children are in close quarters.

### What are the symptoms of the disease?

Symptoms usually include:

- Fever
- Sore Throat
- Fatigue
- Cough
- Runny Nose
- Loss of appetite
- Painful sores in the mouth and on the tongue
- Fussiness, especially in infants and toddlers
- A rash on the palms of the hand, soles of the feet and sometimes buttocks, that looks like blisters.



**Prevention and Treatment:**

- **Wash hands frequently** with soap and water and dry them after going to the toilet, before eating or handling food and after using the bathroom or changing a diaper
- **Clean and disinfect** high-touch surfaces, toys, eating and drinking utensils, and bathroom sinks and toilets after use.
- **Avoid close contact with sick people.** If your child is sick with HFMD, they should stay home for 10 days or until their rashes have healed.

There is no specific treatment for HFMD. Tylenol may be taken for fever and pain relief, along with plenty of rest and drinking lots of liquids to prevent dehydration. **See a healthcare provider immediately if symptoms worsen.**

Please contact your doctor or the following numbers for assistance:

Communicable Disease Unit.....488-2450  
BNH Out-Patient Department....488-2555  
Emergency Room.....488-2558  
For emergencies, please call.....911

You can find more information about Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD) here:

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) <https://www.cdc.gov/hand-foot-mouth/index.html>