

Herpangina in Children



What is herpangina in children?

Herpangina is a sudden viral illness in children. It causes small blister-like bumps or sores (ulcers) in the mouth, back of the throat, or the roof of the mouth.

Herpangina is often seen in babies and children younger than 10. It's seen most often in the summer and fall. But it can occur anytime of the year.

What causes herpangina in a child?

Herpangina is caused by a virus. The most common viruses that cause it are:

- Coxsackievirus A16 and A6
- Coxsackie B virus
- Enterovirus A71
- Echovirus

What are the symptoms of herpangina in a child?

Each child's symptoms may feel a bit different. The most common symptoms of herpangina are:

- Blister-like bumps in the mouth, often in the back of the throat, and on the roof of the mouth
- Sudden fever
- High fever, sometimes up to 105°F (40.6°C)
- Pain in the mouth or throat
- A general feeling of discomfort (malaise)
- Headache
- Drooling
- Decrease in appetite
- Neck pain
- Fussiness (irritability)

How is herpangina diagnosed in a child?

Your child's healthcare provider can diagnose herpangina with a complete health history and physical exam of your child. The sores have a distinct look so they are often easy to identify.

How is herpangina treated in a child?

Treatment will depend on your child's symptoms, age, and general health. It will also depend on how bad the condition is.

The goal of treatment is to help ease symptoms. Herpangina is a viral infection. Antibiotics don't work to treat the illness. Treatment may include:

- Drinking more fluids
- Taking acetaminophen for any fever
- Taking pain relievers by mouth (oral), such as lozenges
- Oral care, such as saltwater (saline) rinses
- Eating a healthy diet of light, liquid, or semiliquid foods with enough calories. Your child should stay away from acidic and spicy foods.

Most children with the illness feel better in about a week. It's important that your child drinks enough fluids to prevent getting dehydrated.

How can I help prevent herpangina in my child?

Have your child wash their hands often with soap and clean, running water for at least 20 seconds. This is especially important when they are around other children with viral illnesses. Also keep your child home when they are ill. This can help prevent the illness from being spread to other children.

Key points about herpangina in children

- Herpangina is an acute viral illness in children.
- Common symptoms are small blister-like bumps or sores (ulcers) in the mouth and fever.
- It is caused by a virus. One common cause is coxsackievirus A16.
- Treatment may include fluids and medicine for fever and pain.
- Have your child wash their hands with soap and clean, running water for at least 20 seconds when around other sick children. Also keep your child home when they are ill. Both of these measures can prevent the spread of herpangina.

Next steps

Tips to help you get the most from a visit to your child's healthcare provider:

- Know the reason for the visit and what you want to happen.
- Before your visit, write down questions you want answered.
- At the visit, write down the name of a new diagnosis, and any new medicines, treatments, or tests. Also write down any new instructions your provider gives you for your child.
- Know why a new medicine or treatment is prescribed and how it will help your child. Also know what the side effects are and when they should be reported.
- Ask if your child's condition can be treated in other ways.
- Know why a test or procedure is recommended and what the results could mean.
- Know what to expect if your child does not take the medicine or have the test or procedure.
- If your child has a follow-up appointment, write down the date, time, and purpose for that visit.
- Know how you can contact your child's healthcare provider after office hours, and on weekends and holidays. This is important if your child becomes ill and you have questions or need advice.

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