

What does RCA recommend and require for a child to return to school after HFMD?

- If parents can care for their child at home, RCA recommends waiting until the blisters are fully resolved or mostly healed before returning to school.
- If parents are unable to provide care at home, please follow the AAP-based return-to-childcare guidelines below

What does the AAP require for a child to return to childcare after HFMD?

According to guidance informed by the **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)** and **CDC-aligned sources**, children with *hand, foot, and mouth disease* (HFMD) generally **do not need to stay out of childcare once they are well enough and no longer symptomatic in key ways** — because the virus can be spread even before symptoms appear, and exclusion after symptoms begin doesn't significantly reduce transmission.

[HealthyChildren.org+2CDC+2](#)

AAP/Expert-Aligned Return-to-Childcare Criteria

A child may return to childcare when all of the following are true:

✓ 1. Fever is gone

- No fever for at least **24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication**. [CDC](#)

✓ 2. The child feels well enough to participate

- They are active and able to take part in regular activities. [HealthyChildren.org](#)

✓ 3. No uncontrolled drooling or excessive discomfort from mouth sores

- If pain from mouth sores causes constant drooling or interferes with eating/drinking, childcare may not be appropriate until it improves. [CDC](#)

Important Notes

- **Visible rash or mouth blisters alone are not a reason to keep a child home** if they are otherwise well and able to participate. [CDC](#)
- HFMD viruses can be present in stool for **weeks after symptoms**, but this *does not usually affect return-to-childcare decisions*. [CDC](#)

- Local health departments or specific outbreak policies at your childcare may require additional criteria during outbreaks — check your center’s policy as well.