

FIFTH DISEASE (ERYTHEMA INFECTIOSUM)

Fifth disease is a mild illness caused by a virus called human parvovirus B19. The disease is similar to the many other “common cold” viruses and is rarely serious. It can be distinguished by the appearance of a red rash on the cheeks, garnering it the unique name of a “slapped cheek” rash.

Fifth disease is spread from person to person by coughing, sneezing or touching droplets from the nose and mouth of an infected person. Once the rash appears, the person can no longer spread the infection.

SYMPTOMS

- Fever
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Sneezing
- Fatigue
- Rash on the face with “slapped cheek” appearance
- Rash on the body, arms and legs (*Usually follows the rash on the face, may be itchy, can recur for weeks to months after the infection and often triggered by temperature and sunlight*)
- Muscle or joint pain and swelling (*More common in older children and adults*)

TREATMENT

There is no treatment for fifth disease, most people get well on their own. If your child has fever or joint pain, you may give acetaminophen (brand name: Tylenol) or ibuprofen (if older than 6 months; brand name: Motrin, Advil). Antibiotics **do not** work on fifth disease. Do not give aspirin-containing products.

PREVENTION

- Wash hands often
- Cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing
- Avoid touching nose or mouth
- Properly dispose of used facial tissues

Pregnant women should avoid close contact of children with fifth disease. If exposed, they should call their health provider. Although the risk is low, fifth disease may harm an unborn child.

WHEN TO CALL YOUR DOCTOR

- Fever more than 101° F for 3 days
- Severe joint pain or swelling
- Your child has an immune/blood disorder (cancer, sickle cell disease) with fifth disease

RETURN TO SCHOOL/CHILD CARE

- As long as they are no longer having fever, children with fifth disease may attend school or child care because they can no longer spread the infection once the rash appears