



Public Health Services

Fifth Disease

(Erythema Infectiosum)

What is fifth disease?

- Fifth disease is a mild viral rash illness caused by the human Parvovirus B19.
- It is not the same virus that causes parvovirus in cats and dogs.
- Most people are infected between 5 and 14 years of age.
- The infection gives life-long immunity.
- Parvovirus may rarely cause problems for the unborn child and for those people with chronic blood disorders or immunodeficiencies.

How does a person get fifth disease?

- The virus is spread by direct contact with droplets from the nose and throat of infected people.
- It can also be spread by direct contact with the saliva of infected people by sharing drinking cups or utensils.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Symptoms usually start 4 to 20 days after a person has been exposed.
- A "slapped cheek", red, patchy rash on the face is most common.
- A lacy-like rash may appear on other parts of the body; the rash may be itchy.
- This rash may come and go. Heat (sunlight, warm bath/shower) may bring out the rash.

- Other symptoms including fever, headache and cold symptoms may appear before the rash.
- Joint pain is likely to occur in adults.
- The disease is usually mild.
- In most cases the disease is diagnosed by the appearance of a typical rash.
- A blood test is available to rule out other rash illnesses such as measles and rubella.

How is fifth disease treated?

- There is no specific treatment.

How is fifth disease prevented?

- Practice good handwashing.
- **Do not share** drinking cups and eating utensils.
- Exclusion from school or daycare is not recommended because the person is no longer infectious once the rash appears.
- If you are pregnant, immunodeficient or have a blood disorder and have been exposed to the virus, inform your doctor.

Quick Facts

- a mild disease
- infectious before the rash appears
- no exclusion
- can be a concern for pregnant women
- good handwashing reduces spread

For more information contact your doctor or Public Health Services at **655-4612**