

FACT SHEET

Fifth Disease

What is fifth disease?

Fifth disease is a mild rash disease that is more common in children than adults. It is a viral infection caused by the human parvovirus, B19. Most cases appear in winter and spring. Outbreaks are not unusual in schools.

How is it spread?

Fifth disease is spread through respiratory secretions, nasal sputum, and saliva when an infected person sneezes or coughs. A person is most contagious with fifth disease during the fever, runny nose, or cold like symptoms prior to developing the rash.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms include fever, runny nose and headache followed by a rash. A "slapped cheek" appearance is common.

- Fever
- Runny nose
- Headache
- Rash
- Joint Pain

Once you get the rash you are most likely no longer contagious, so it is usually okay to return to school or work.

How can it be prevented?

There is no specific medicine or vaccine to prevent fifth disease, but you can take steps to prevent illness every day.

- Handwashing is important, especially after touching any oral or nasal secretions.
- Cover your mouth when you sneeze or cough.
- Avoid close contact with others who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.

How is it treated?

There is no specific treatment for fifth disease. Treatment usually involves relieving symptoms, such as fever, itching, and joint pain and swelling.

This fact sheet is for informational purposes only and is not intended for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov.

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