

Fifth Disease

Dear Parent or Guardian,

You are being provided with this fact sheet:

- Because you or your child may have been exposed to fifth disease.
 - For informational purposes only.
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General Information About Fifth Disease

What is fifth disease?

- Fifth disease is a mild illness caused by a virus called parvovirus B19.
- It is also known as “slapped cheek disease” or Erythema Infectiosum (EI).
- It is most common in the late winter, spring, and early summer months.

Who can get it?

- Anyone can get fifth disease.
- It is most common in children.
- Some groups of people who get fifth disease are at higher risk of getting very sick or developing medical problems, including people who:
 - Have sickle-cell disease.
 - Have chronic anemia.
 - Have a weakened immune system.
 - Are pregnant.
- **People in a higher risk group (see above) should contact their healthcare provider if they think they've been exposed to, or have, fifth disease.**

What are the symptoms?

- Fever (American Academy of Pediatrics defines fever as a temperature of 100.4°F [38°C] or higher)
- Feeling tired
- Runny nose
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- A rash appears days to week after other symptoms start. The rash on the cheeks is bright red, making them look like they have been "slapped".
- The rash then spreads down to the chest, stomach, arms and legs, and changes into red blotches (usually lighter in color).
- As the center of the blotches begin to clear, the rash takes on a lacy net-like appearance.
- After the rash goes away, it may return when exposed to heat for several weeks.
- Adults who get fifth disease may develop the same rash seen in children, as well as joint pain and swelling.
- While not common, other symptoms can include itchiness, cough, diarrhea, vomiting, runny nose, or joint aches.
- Many people with fifth disease will not have symptoms.

How is fifth disease spread?

- The virus that causes fifth disease is found in droplets from coughs, sneezes, drool, and runny noses.
 - The virus can spread when a person who has fifth disease coughs or sneezes and another person breathes in the droplets.
 - It can also spread by:
 - touching an object or surface that has the virus on it and then touching the mouth, eyes, or nose.
 - Sharing utensils or cups with someone who has fifth disease.
 - Fifth disease most easily spreads from person-to-person during the early part of the illness when it appears to be 'just a cold.' Once the rash appears, a person can no longer spread the virus.
 - The virus only infects humans. Animal parvoviruses are different, so cats and dogs cannot spread fifth disease.
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How Do I Know If My Child Has Fifth Disease?

- A health care provider can typically diagnose fifth disease based on a person's symptoms.
- In some cases, a healthcare provider may order a blood test to check for antibodies to the virus.

If you have additional questions or are concerned your child has fifth disease, contact your healthcare provider. This fact sheet provides general information only.

What If My Child Has Fifth Disease?

Notify your child care provider or preschool immediately if your child has fifth disease.

How is it treated?

- Fifth disease is usually a mild illness that gets better on its own.
- Keep children comfortable, allow them to rest, make sure they drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration, and check on them often.
- Infants 3 months or younger with a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher should be seen by their healthcare provider.
- Talk with your child's healthcare provider if you have any concerns about your child's symptoms. **If your child is showing signs of dehydration (fewer wet diapers or less urine than usual, more tired than normal, dizziness, dry tongue or lips, fewer tears) they need to be seen by a healthcare provider immediately.**

How can I help prevent fifth disease from spreading?

- Stay home when sick.
 - Wash hands often, especially after sneezing, coughing, or wiping noses.
 - Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, or nose.
 - Avoid sharing cups, eating utensils, food, and drinks with anyone who has fifth disease.
 - Thoroughly clean toys and other objects children put into their mouths with soap and water.
 - Clean and sanitize household surfaces.
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Does My Child Need to Stay Home from Child Care?

No. Children who have been exposed to, or have been diagnosed with, fifth disease can continue to attend child care **unless**:

- They have a fever (temperature of 100.4°F [38°C] or higher) along with other symptoms.
- They do not feel well enough to participate in classroom activities (for example: unusually tired; cranky or fussy; or crying more than normal).

Please follow your child care program's sickness policy.

References

American Academy of Pediatrics

- Caring for our Children, Chapter 3 Health Promotion and Protection, 3.6 Management of Illness, 3.6.1 Inclusion/Exclusion Due to Illness
- Caring for our Children, Chapter 7 Infectious Diseases, 7.3 Respiratory Tract Infections, 7.3.6 Parvovirus B19, 7.3.6.1 Attendance of Children with Erythema Infectiosum (EI) (Parvovirus B19)
- Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools, 6th Edition. Pages 107-108

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

- Parvovirus B19 and Fifth Disease. <https://www.cdc.gov/parvovirusb19/fifth-disease.html>