

FIFTH DISEASE FACT SHEET

Parents are kindly requested to keep their children out of school for minimum of 5 days after the rash develops.

What is fifth disease?

Fifth disease is a viral infection caused by human parvovirus B19.

What are the symptoms of fifth disease?

The first symptoms of fifth disease are usually mild and nonspecific. Symptoms usually include

- Low-grade fever
- Runny nose and sore throat
- Headache.

A rash on face and body then follows after several days. The red face rash is called the 'slapped cheek' rash and is the most recognized feature of fifth disease. Some people may get a second rash a few days later on their chest, back, buttocks, or arms and legs. The rash may be itchy, especially on the soles of the feet. The rash can vary in intensity and may come and go for several weeks. It usually goes away in 7 to 10 days, but it can last several weeks. As the rash starts to go away, it may look lacy.

People with fifth disease can also develop pain and swelling in their joints.

Is it serious?

Fifth disease is usually mild for children and adults who are otherwise healthy.

How does fifth disease spread?

Fifth disease can spread by coughing or sneezing, and by hand-to-hand contact. It can also spread through blood or blood products. A pregnant woman who is infected with parvovirus B19 can pass the virus to her baby. Fifth Disease is most contagious from the time the nasal congestion and fever appears but before the rash develops. Once the rash appears, the disease is generally less contagious.

Good hygiene including proper hand washing can help prevent the spread of the virus.

How is fifth disease treated?

There is no specific treatment for fifth disease as it is usually a mild illness where the condition usually improves without treatment. Paracetamol and ibuprofen can be used to reduce a fever and treat any headache or sore throat symptoms.

If your symptoms don't improve after five days, or suddenly worsen, contact a doctor for advice.