

## Fifth Disease

Fifth disease (also known as erythema infectiosum) is a mild, common rash illness caused by a virus. Outbreaks of fifth disease frequently occur in child care setting and schools.

**CAUSE:** *Human parvovirus B19*

**SYMPTOMS:** Rash; sometimes a fever or sore throat. The characteristic rash causes a striking redness of the cheeks ("slapped cheek") in children. It often begins on the cheeks and is later found on the arms, upper body, buttocks, and legs; it has a very fine, lacy, pink appearance and itches. The rash tends to come and go for days or even weeks, especially as a response to sunlight or heat. In general, the rash around the face will fade within 4 days. The rash on the rest of the body fades within 3 to 7 days of its appearance. Pain and swelling of the joints may occur, especially in adults.

**TRANSMISSION:** Person to person, most likely through respiratory secretions. Can be epidemic among children.

**INCUBATION:** It takes from 4 to 20 days from the time a person is exposed until symptoms begin.

**CONTAGIOUS PERIOD:** Not well documented but greatest before onset of rash and probably not communicable after onset of rash.



**EXCLUSION**

If other rash-causing illnesses are ruled out, there is no need to exclude or isolate the child, as long as fever is no longer present.

### **Prevention & Control**

1. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds after wiping the nose or mouth. If hand sanitizers are used, they may be used only after thorough hand washing.
2. Dispose of tissues containing respiratory secretions properly.
3. Treatment: None.



Pregnant women should be aware of the potential risk of complications to the fetus if Fifth disease is acquired during pregnancy. These risks include fetal anemia with hydrops fetalis and fetal death in less than 10% of such infections.

For more information, you or your physician may call the Central District Health Department at 385-5175, or your local health department.