

Fifth Disease (Erythema Infectiosum)

Adapted from American Academy of Pediatrics

What is it?

- Human parvovirus B19 infection with rash occurring 1 to 3 weeks after infection.

What are the signs or symptoms?

- Bright red or rosy rash ("slapped cheek" appearance) on both cheeks for 1 to 3 days followed by pink "lacy" rash on extremities for 1 - 3 weeks.
- No fever or low-grade fever (less than 101°F)
- Muscle aches, headache, may cause joint pain (more common in adults)

What are the incubation and contagious periods?

- Incubation period: 4 to 14 days but can be as long as 21 days.
- Contagious period: Until the rash appears.

How is it spread?

- Direct contact with respiratory secretions (outbreaks occur in late winter and early spring)
- Exposure to blood or blood products
- Exposure of a fetus in the uterus of a mother who becomes infected during pregnancy.

How do you control it?

- Hand washing, sanitation of contaminated items, disposal of tissues containing nose and throat secretions

Home Care

- Treatment: No treatment is necessary
- No need to exclude from group setting unless
 - The child has sickle cell disease or a compromised immune system. Children with these conditions may shed large amounts of virus and may appear ill.
 - The child is unable to participate
- Pregnant women: 10% of fetuses who are infected with fifth disease before birth develop severe anemia or may even die. This virus, however, doesn't cause any birth defects. If you are pregnant and exposed to a child with fifth disease before the child develops the rash, see your obstetrician. He or she will get a sample of your blood for an antibody test to see if you already had the disease and are protected from becoming infected again. If you do not have antibodies against fifth disease, your pregnancy will need to be monitored closely.

Call our office

- During regular hours if:
 - The rash becomes itchy
 - Your child develops a fever over 101°F
 - You feel your child is getting worse
 - You have other concerns or questions

