



Fact Sheet: Fifth Disease

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used 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.

What is fifth disease?

Fifth disease is a mild rash illness caused by a virus known as parvovirus B19. It clears up on its own among children and adults who are otherwise healthy.

How is fifth disease spread?

The virus of Fifth Disease is spread mostly by respiratory droplets. This means when an infected person coughs or sneezes, the virus can spread to another person who is close by. Once the rash is present, the person is usually no longer infectious. The virus can also be spread via blood products. A pregnant woman who is infected with the virus can pass it to her baby.

What are the symptoms of fifth disease?

- Fever
- Headache
- Runny nose
- Bright red rash on the cheeks (“slapped cheek” rash) followed by a fine lacy rash over the rest of the body that may itch. The rash may last for 7 to 10 days. After exposure to sunlight or heat, the rash may reappear for 1 to 3 weeks. Other symptoms are usually gone by the time the rash appears.
- Adults may have joint pain and swelling which usually lasts a few days.

Symptoms begin from 4 to 20 days after exposure

How is it treated?

Fifth Disease is usually mild and resolves on its own. There is no specific treatment for this disease because it is caused by a virus, but symptoms can be reduced by the following:

- Treat fevers with non-aspirin products (acetaminophen, ibuprofen).
- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink plenty of fluids such as water, fruit juice, and tea.

How is fifth disease prevented?

There is no vaccine to prevent fifth disease. In order to limit the spread of the virus, use a tissue to cover mouth when coughing or sneezing.

Wash hands often throughout the day.

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