

FIFTH DISEASE

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is Fifth Disease?

Fifth disease is a viral infection caused by the human parvo virus, B19. Most cases appear in winter and spring, and clusters or outbreaks are not unusual in elementary and middle schools. It is common in children but adults can become infected also.

How is it spread?

- The interval from exposure to development of the rash is usually 4-20 days.
- Mode of spread probably involves respiratory secretions and blood.
- Can be transmitted from infected mother to a fetus.
- 50% of adults have serological evidence of past infection and are probably not susceptible to reinfection.

How is it treated?

Treatment is supportive. A physician may recommend acetaminophen to control fever. Fluids and rest are encouraged.

How can we prevent Fifth Disease?

- Transmission of infection is likely to be lessened by routine hygienic practices for control of respiratory infections which include good hand washing and disposal of tissues containing respiratory sections.
- Exposed pregnant women should consult their physician regarding antibody testing to determine susceptibility and assist with counseling regarding risk to their fetuses.
- Pregnant women with infected children at home are advised to wash their hands frequently and avoid sharing eating utensils.

SYMPTOMS OF FIFTH DISEASE

- A bright red rash begins on the face producing a slapped cheek appearance.
- After 1-4 days a lacy-like rash appears on the arms, trunk, buttocks, and thighs.
- Rash usually lasts 1-3 weeks.
- The rash recurs and fluctuates in intensity with environmental changes such as temperature and sunlight.
- Other possible symptoms are fever, headache, fatigue and aching of the joints.
- Can also have mild respiratory or gastrointestinal illness without the rash.
- Persons are most infectious before the onset of illness and are unlikely to be infectious after onset of the rash or other symptoms.



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