

Fifth Disease – “Slapped Cheek” disease

Fifth disease is caused by a virus called Parvovirus B19. The virus is usually mild for children and adults who are otherwise healthy.

Symptoms usually start within 4 to 14 days after contracting the virus. The initial symptoms of Fifth Disease usually include headache, runny nose and fever. After a few days the infected person may get a red, itchy rash on his/her face. In some cases the rash will spread to the chest, back, buttocks and/or arms and legs. It can take up to 7-10 days for the rash to disappear completely.

Fifth disease is usually spread through respiratory secretions (such as saliva, sputum, or nasal mucus) when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The infected person is most contagious when it seems like he/she is "just having a cold" and before he/she develops the rash. After the rash appears the infected person is not likely to be contagious, so then it is usually safe for the child to go back to school.

Fifth Disease is usually mild and will go away on its own. There is no vaccine or medicine that can prevent parvovirus B19 infection, but the infected person could make use of over the counter medication for symptomatic relieve of fever and itchiness.

To avoid spreading the disease to other people in the household, please make sure that the infected person covers his/her mouth when coughing or sneezing; washes hands with soap and water frequently and always after going to the toilet, wiping/blowing nose, coughing and sneezing; and do not share eating utensils.

Should your child show any symptoms of Fifth Disease, please keep your child at home and consult your doctor to have it confirmed. Should your doctor confirm that your child has Fifth Disease, please follow the guidelines from your doctor regarding when to send your child back to school. If your child has a confirmed case of Fifth Disease, please inform the school as soon as possible.