

# Fact Sheet: Fifth Disease

## What is Fifth Disease?

Fifth Disease is caused by a virus known as parvovirus B 19. It is a common childhood disease which occurs in the winter and spring. You can get this disease only once in your lifetime.

## What are the symptoms?

- low grade fever, possibly no fever
- headache
- body ache
- 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 5 to 7 days. After exposure to sunlight or heat, the rash may reappear for 1-3 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 4-20 days after exposure.

## How is it 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. Once the rash is present, the person is usually no longer infectious.

## How is it treated?

There is no specific treatment for this disease because it is caused by a virus.

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

## What are the serious complications of Fifth Disease?

Children with sickle cell anemia, chronic anemia, or an impaired immune system may become seriously ill and require medical care. Pregnant women (who have not previously had the illness) should avoid contact with persons who have Fifth Disease. The virus can infect the baby prior to birth and could cause the death of an unborn fetus during the first half of pregnancy.

## How is it prevented?

- Use a tissue to catch sneezes and coughs and dispose of used tissues in the trash.
- Wash your hands frequently throughout the day, especially after using the bathroom and before cooking or eating. Teach your children to wash their hands.
- If you are pregnant and think you have been exposed to Fifth Disease, call your doctor as soon as possible.

*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, call your health care provider or call Washtenaw County Public Health at 734-544-6700.*



Visit our website at: <http://publichealth.eWashtenaw.org>

Or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

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