

Facts about Fifth Disease (Parvovirus B19)

Fifth disease is caused by a virus. There is no medicine to stop or treat it.

Fifth disease can start with fever and muscle ache. Then, a week or so later a very red rash may appear on the cheeks. It looks like the child's face has been slapped. In 1 to 4 days, a red spotted rash may appear on the arms. The rash then spreads to rest of the body and may last from 1 to 3 weeks. The child may also have a fever. **Once the rash appears, fifth disease is no longer catching.**

The illness is often very mild. Sometimes a child may not even feel sick. Adults usually get a worse case with fever and painful joints.

At least 50% of adults have had fifth disease as children and will not get it again.

Fifth disease may be more serious for some people. The following people should talk to their doctor if they get fifth disease:

- people with immune system problems
- children with sickle cell anemia or some other forms of anemia; it can make the anemia worse
- pregnant women

Women who are or who may become pregnant can have a blood test to see if they are immune to fifth disease.

How is Fifth Disease Spread?

Fifth disease is spread:

- through droplets in the air, after someone with fifth disease has breathed, coughed or sneezed
- by direct contact with the saliva of someone with fifth disease
- by pregnant women to their developing babies



What to Do at Home

- Watch your child for signs of fifth disease if another child in the school or centre has it.
- When looking after a child with fifth disease, wash your hands often during the day and before preparing or eating food.
- Call your doctor if you are pregnant and your child gets fifth disease or you are exposed to someone with fifth disease.



Children with fifth disease may go to the child care centre or school if they feel well enough to take part in activities.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol™, Tempra™) or ibuprofen (Advil™, Motrin™) may help reduce a fever and provide some comfort. Always follow the directions on the package about how much and how often to take acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

Never give products containing ASA (acetylsalicylic acid, such as Aspirin™) to anyone under the age of 20 years. Use of ASA products by children can lead to Reye's syndrome, a serious condition affecting the brain and liver.