

Fifth Disease (Parvovirus B19)

What is fifth disease?

Fifth disease is an infection caused by parvovirus B19. This is generally a mild rash illness that affects mostly children. Adults who are not immune may become infected. Parvovirus B19 only infects humans and is not the same illness that pets such as dogs and cats may receive immunizations for.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of fifth disease are generally mild and may include a low-grade fever, tiredness, and the characteristic “slapped – cheek” rash on the face. Children may exhibit “cold” symptoms a few days before the rash appears. There may also be a rash on the trunk and limbs, which may cause itching. Illness is usually not severe and the rash generally resolves in 7-10 days. It typically takes 4-14 days to have symptoms after being infected with the virus, but may take as long as 20 days. Some people with fifth disease may not have any symptoms at all.

How is fifth disease transmitted?

Fifth disease virus can be found in nasal and respiratory secretions. It is most likely spread from person to person by direct contact or sharing such items as cups and utensils. A person infected with parvovirus B19 is contagious generally during the “cold” symptoms and are no longer contagious by the time the rash appears.

How is it treated?

Treatment of symptoms is usually all that is required for fifth disease. This may include pain relievers/fever reducers, or topical medications for itching. Some people with blood disorders such as chronic anemia or sickle-cell disease may experience severe illness. Complications may also occur occasionally in pregnant women. Contact your health care provider for further information.

Can fifth disease be prevented?

There is currently no vaccine for fifth disease. The best prevention is frequent handwashing, especially if in close contact with someone infected with the illness. Excluding persons with fifth disease from work, child care centers, or schools is not likely to prevent the spread of the virus, since people are contagious before they develop the rash.

For more information, contact the Broward County Health Department at 954-847-3567, or visit the websites below. This fact sheet is for informational purposes only and is not intended for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider.

www.cdc.gov
www.browardchd.org

Information provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention