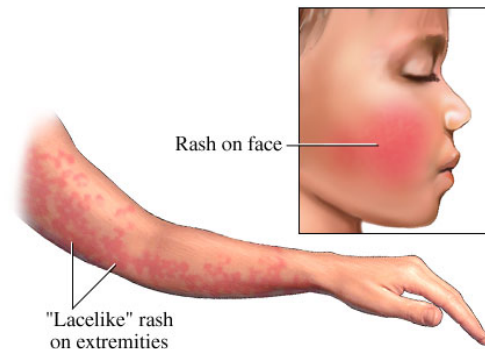


Fifth's Disease (Erythema Infectiosum) Information and Control Measures

What is Fifth's Disease?

Fifth Disease, also known as slapped cheek disease, is an infection caused by a virus (human parvovirus B 19). It is so named because Fifth disease was the fifth pink-red rash to be described by doctors. Children usually get sick with it in the winter and spring, but a child can become ill with the disease any time of the year.



How is Fifth Disease detected?

Fifth Disease is characterized by a rash which begins as a bright redness of the cheeks (the slapped face appearance) and a rose-colored rash on the upper arms and upper legs. The rash may be spread to involve the trunk, buttocks, and lower extremities. After a few days the rash will take a lace-like appearance as it gradually fades away.

The child may have one or more of the following symptoms:

- Low fever less than 100.4 Fahrenheit
- Tiredness, runny nose, sore throat, headache, or cold-like symptoms
- May not feel ill at all
- Flushed cheeks (looks like the face has been slapped)
- Rash on the arms, legs and body that may last up to 3-6 weeks.

Cold-like symptoms will pass and the illness seems to be gone and then the rash will appear a few days later. The bright red rash typically begins on the face. Several days later the rash spreads and red blotches (usually lighter in color) extend down to the trunk, arms and legs. The rash usually spares the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet. As the centers of the blotches begin to clear, the rash takes on a lacy net-like appearance.

Certain stimuli including sunlight, heat, exercise and stress may reactivate the rash until it completely fades.

How is Fifth Disease spread?

Fifth disease is a mildly contagious disease. However, infected individuals are likely to be more contagious before the onset of the rash.

Fifth disease is spread through direct contact with fluids from the nose, mouth, and throat of someone with the infection, especially through large droplets from coughs and sneezes.

How long is Fifth Disease contagious?

Fifth Disease is contagious for about one week before the rash appears. A child is no longer contagious when the rash appears. After this, he may return to school as long as the fever has been gone for 24 hours.

Fifth disease may cause miscarriages and in rare cases can cause severe anemia. Adults can contract Fifth Disease. Most adults get a mild pink rash of the cheeks. Some may have joint pains that last from one to three months.

Pregnant women and any person with weak immune systems, sickle cell anemia or other blood disorders should consult a doctor.

Control Measures for Fifth Disease:

Children with a fever greater than 100.4 Fahrenheit and a rash will be sent home from school and can return when fever free for 24 hours. The school nurse should encourage good hand washing and proper disposal of used facial tissues.

References:

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Information for Patients and Families. www.choa.org. "Fifth Disease".

Selekman, Janice. School Nursing: A Comprehensive Text. Philadelphia: F.A Davis Company 2006.

American Academy of Pediatrics. Red Book 2003 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases, 26th Edition. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics 2003.

