FIFTH DISEASE

SOURCE: JOHN HOPKINS HEALTH

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Health (taken from)

What is fifth disease in children?

Fifth disease is a viral illness that causes a rash (exanthem). Fifth disease is also called erythema infectiosum. And it’s known as "slapped cheek" disease. This is because the rash can cause a child's cheeks to become very red. Fifth disease is spread from one child to another through direct contact with fluid from the nose and throat. It can also be spread through contact with infected blood. It is somewhat contagious.

What causes fifth disease in a child?

Fifth disease is caused by **human** **parvovirus B19.** It occurs most often in the winter and spring.

Which children are at risk for fifth disease?

It is most common in young school-age children. Children often get it at school or other places where children gather. Adults can get fifth disease too, but most infections are in children.

What are the symptoms of fifth disease in a child?

Symptoms usually show up **4 to 14 days after a child is exposed to the disease.** About 4 in 5 infected children have very mild symptoms for about a week before getting the rash. About 1 in 5 will have no symptoms at all before the rash appears. ***Children are most contagious before the rash occurs, before they know they have the disease.***

**Early symptoms are usually very mild. These may include:**

* Low fever
* Headache
* Runny nose
* Sore throat
* Itching
* Nausea or vomiting
* Diarrhea
* A rash is usually the main symptom of fifth disease.
* The rash: **Starts on the CHEEKS AND IS BRIGHT RED**

Spreads to the trunk, arms, and legs, and lasts 2 to 4 days. It often has a "lacey" appearance. May come back when the child is exposed to sunlight, heat or cold, or injury to the skin. This may continue for several days.

The symptoms of fifth disease can be like other health conditions. Make sure your child sees his or her healthcare provider for a diagnosis.

How is fifth disease diagnosed in a child?

The healthcare provider will ask about your child's symptoms and health history. He or she will give your child a physical exam. The physical exam will include inspecting the rash. The rash is unique to fifth disease, and may be enough to diagnose your child. In some cases, your child may also have blood tests.

What are the possible complications of fifth disease in a child?

Fifth disease is usually a mild illness. In some cases, it may cause acute severe anemia in a child with sickle-cell disease or a weak immune system. In a pregnant woman with fifth disease, there is a small risk of death of the baby in the womb.

How can I help prevent fifth disease in my child?

The best ways to keep fifth disease from spreading include:

* Washing hands well with soap and warm water
* Covering the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing