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# Fifth Disease

## *What You Need to Know*

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### **What is Fifth Disease?**

Fifth disease is a mild rash illness caused by a virus called Parvovirus B19. Serious illness can develop in persons with anemia or immunosuppression. Occasionally serious complications may develop from infection during pregnancy.

### **Who can get Fifth Disease?**

Anyone can get Fifth Disease, but it is seen more often in elementary school-age children.

### **What are the symptoms of Fifth Disease?**

- Fever
- Tiredness
- Lacy red rash on the cheeks which may spread to the body. The rash may itch.
- Adults often have joint pain and swelling.

### **How long after exposure do symptoms begin?**

Four to fourteen days after exposure, the fever and tiredness may begin. By the third week, the rash generally appears.

### **How is Fifth Disease spread?**

Fifth Disease is spread person to person through sneezing, coughing, and sharing cups and utensils.

### **How long is a person contagious?**

People with Fifth Disease may spread the virus before the rash begins. By the time the rash is present, the person is usually not contagious.

### **Are there complications?**

There can be complications from Fifth Disease. Pregnant women who come in contact with the virus should call their doctor. Most pregnant women will not be affected, but there is a small chance of miscarriage. Rarely severe anemia develops in people with chronic red blood cell disorders (like sickle cell anemia) and immunodeficient people (like those on chemotherapy or with AIDS).

### **Is there a treatment for Fifth Disease?**

There is no specific treatment for Fifth Disease. It usually resolves on its own.

## How can Fifth Disease be prevented?

There is no vaccine or medicine to prevent Fifth Disease. Wash hands often, especially after touching droplets from the mouth and nose. Cough or sneeze into a tissue and throw it in the trash right away.

### HAND WASHING INSTRUCTIONS:

- use soap and running water
- rub your hands vigorously for 20 seconds
- wash all surfaces, including:
  - backs of hands
  - wrists
  - between fingers
  - under fingernails
- rinse well
- dry hands with a paper towel
- turn off the water using a paper towel instead of bare hands



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