

## Fifth Disease

Fifth disease is a mild viral illness that most commonly affects children. A child with fifth disease is often mildly ill (temp<100, malaise, cold symptoms) in the days preceding presentation of a rash. The rash typically appears on the face, trunk, and limbs in a lacy red pattern that gives a “slapped cheek” appearance. It is a mild illness that resolves on its own in healthy children and adults.

Fifth disease is caused by parvovirus B19. This virus only infects humans, not pets. Most adults are immune to the virus due to previous infection and cannot get fifth disease. Adults who are not immune can be infected and develop symptoms. About 20% of infected individuals do not develop any symptoms.

Fifth disease is contagious before the rash breaks out, similar to other viral illnesses such as the common cold. Once the rash appears the child is no longer contagious.

Parvovirus B19 has been found in saliva, sputum, and nasal mucus and is probably spread from person to person through direct contact with those secretions. Prevention includes frequent and thorough hand washing in addition to avoiding sharing of drinking cups and eating utensils. No vaccine or medicine is available to prevent the illness. Excluding persons with fifth disease from work or school does not prevent the spread of the virus because people are not contagious once the rash appears.

Individuals who are affected by other serious illness such as sickle cell disease, chronic anemia, cancer, HIV, and are immune deficient should consult with their physicians. The fifth disease virus sometimes can cause illness in an unborn baby, so it is recommended that pregnant women report known exposure to their physician. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) does not recommend pregnant women be excluded from a work place during an outbreak.

More information is available at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or [www.health.state.pa.us](http://www.health.state.pa.us).