North Monterey County Unified School District

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FACTS ABOUT FIFTH DISEASE

What is Fifth Disease?

Fifth Disease is a common viral infection. It is also known as "Erythema Infectiosum" or "Human Parvovirus B19". It is most common in late winter/early spring.

What are signs and symptoms?

- The infection begins with mild runny nose or congestion, headache, or low-grade fever. Many have no fever. This phase of infection is often not noticed or remembered.
- 1-3 weeks later, there is redness of the cheeks ("slapped-cheek" appearance) followed by a lace-like rash on arms, chest, back, or legs. This rash may disappear, only to reappear when exposed to warmth.
- Adults often have more severe symptoms than children, such as fever and joint pain.
- Children with immune disorders or an underlying blood disorder (e.g. sickle cell disease) may have severe symptoms and shed more virus.
- All symptoms disappear without treatment.

How does this virus spread?

It spreads the same way as a cold:

- In the nasal secretions (from sneezing) and often on their hands too.
- By blood transfusion or from an infected pregnant mother to her unborn baby.
- By the time a person develops the "slapped cheek" rash or lacey rash, they are no longer infectious to others.

What are contagious periods?

- After first contacting another infected person, it takes 4-14 days and as long 20 days to get signs of Fifth Disease.
- People are only contagious until the rash appears, then they are not contagious.
- Most adults have had the disease as children and cannot get it again, even if exposed.

What can parents do?

- Parents should contact their physician if their child has Fifth Disease and the parent is pregnant.
- Parents are encouraged to notify the school if their child has a diagnosis of "Fifth Disease"
- Parents of children with known immune problems, sickle cell disease, or other chronic anemia problems, should contact their child's doctor to notify them of the disease or the exposure.
- All students may return to school with the rash as long as they are feeling well enough to take part in activities.

Additional Information.

- Good hand washing technique and cough etiquette: cover noses and mouths with disposable facial tissues when sneezing or coughing, and wash their hands after using facial tissue; or cough/sneeze into the crook of their elbow or their shoulder.
- Preventive measures are most important for pregnant caregivers, pregnant teachers, and pregnant mothers of fellow students. During Fifth Disease outbreaks, they need to contact their physician for further recommendations.