



Hawaii State Department of Health

Disease Investigation Branch

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Fifth Disease

What is Fifth Disease?

Fifth disease is a mild non-febrile (without fever) rash illness caused by *parvovirus B19*. However, it may cause severe complication to persons with chronic blood disorders and pregnant women. If pregnant women and/or persons with red blood cell disorders have had contact with persons with the disease, they should consult with their doctors.

How do you get it?

You can get this virus through exposure to secretions or droplets from the nose and throat of persons with the disease. It also may be passed from mother to fetus, or through blood transfusions or blood products.

Who can get it?

Although this illness occurs mostly in children, some adults can get it. About 50% of adults who have been previously infected with parvovirus B19 have developed immunity to the virus, and cannot get fifth disease.

What are the symptoms?

The ill child typically has a "slapped-cheek" rash on the face and a lacy red rash on the trunk and limbs. The rash may be itchy. Symptoms may also include low-grade fever, malaise, or cold symptoms days before the rash breaks out. The rash resolves in 7 to 10 days.

Adults may have no symptoms or may develop the typical rash of fifth disease, joint pain or swelling, or both. The joint pain and swelling usually resolve in a week or two, but may last several months.

When do the symptoms start?

The symptoms usually appear 4 to 14 days after being infected with the virus, but may not appear for as long as 20 days after infection.

For how long is a person contagious?

A person with fifth disease is most contagious during the early part of the illness, before the rash appears. Once the rash starts, it probably cannot be spread to others. People with immune problems may be infectious for much longer.

What is the treatment for fifth disease?

There is no specific treatment for fifth disease. Medications can be prescribed to relieve symptoms. Persons with severe anemia may require blood transfusions. Persons with immune problems may need special medical care, including treatment with immune globulin (antibodies).

Should infected persons stay home from school or work?

No. By the time a child has the characteristic "slapped cheek" rash of fifth disease, she/he is probably no longer contagious and may return to school or child care center.

How can you keep from getting it?

Frequent handwashing is recommended as a practical and probably effective method to decrease the chance of becoming infected.

For pregnant women, the decision to stay away from a workplace where there are cases of fifth disease is a personal decision, after discussions with her family, physician, and employer.

For more information, see the CDC's website at:

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/revb/respiratory/parvo_b19.htm