

## **Fifth Disease (“Slap Cheek”, Parvovirus)**

**WHAT IS IT?** Fifth disease is typically a mild illness that is caused by a virus (parvovirus). It causes a blotchy red rash that begins on the cheeks (i.e., a slapped-cheek appearance) and spreads to the trunk and limbs. The rash usually fades within a week, but it can come and go for several weeks, often appearing after exercise or sun exposure. The rash can be itchy, or it may be preceded or accompanied by a mild fever and cold symptoms.

Rarely, fifth disease can cause more severe illness in people with sickle cell anemia and immunity problems caused by HIV/AIDS, cancer chemotherapy, organ transplants, and taking steroid medication. If a pregnant woman catches fifth disease for the first time, there is a small risk (less than 10 percent) that it can infect the fetus and cause miscarriage or stillbirth.

**HOW IS IT SPREAD?** Fifth disease is spread by contact with nasal mucus and saliva. It can be spread by coughing and sneezing; kissing on the lips; and sharing food, eating utensils and mouthed toys. It is also spread by touching hands to nose and mouth, reusing tissues, and forgetting to wash hands after blowing the nose. It spreads most easily in crowded and poorly ventilated rooms.

**WHEN IS IT CONTAGIOUS?** Fifth disease is contagious 1-2 weeks before the rash appears. Once the rash appears, the disease is usually not contagious. After exposure to the contagious period of Fifth disease, it typically takes 2-3 weeks to develop the illness.

**HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED AND TREATED?** Fifth disease is usually diagnosed by the distinctive rash. Generally, no treatment is needed. If the rash is very itchy, some medication or lotion might be prescribed to relieve the itching.

Pregnant women and people with blood disorders and immune problems who are exposed to Fifth disease should consult their health care provider. Blood tests may be done to check for previous immunity (antibodies) and/or infection. For serious illness, treatments may be given.

**SHOULD THE CHILD STAY HOME?** A child with Fifth disease does not need to stay home as long as she is feeling well enough to participate in the program’s activities.

### **HOW CAN WE LIMIT THE SPREAD?**

Cough and sneeze into your elbow and away from people.

Wipe runny noses with a clean tissue, throw the tissue away, and then wash your hands.

Don’t share food, pacifiers, bottles, toothbrushes, eating utensils or drinking cups.

Clean and disinfect mouthed toys and dining tables after each use. Clean and disinfect water fountains, telephone receivers and frequently handled items daily

Don’t kiss children on the mouth.

Maximize outdoor play and indoor ventilation

Avoid exposing pregnant women and people with blood disorders and immune problems.