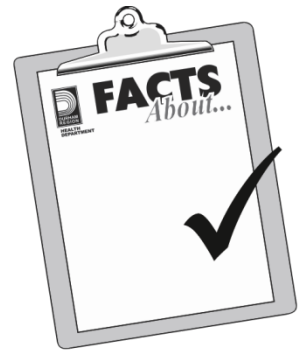




FACTS

About...



HEALTH DEPARTMENT



Fifth Disease (Erythema Infectiosum)

What is it?

Fifth Disease (Erythema Infectiosum) is a common virus illness caused by human parvovirus B19. It is also called “slapped cheek” disease because the virus causes a red rash on the cheeks. Fifth disease is most common in the late winter and early spring.

How is it spread?

Fifth disease is spread by coming in contact with the saliva, nasal and throat secretions of an infected person. Coughing, sneezing, and sharing drinking cups or utensils are common methods of spread. It is infectious starting a few days before the rash starts. Once the rash appears, it is no longer contagious.

What do I look for?

Fifth disease often begins with mild fever, runny nose, headache, and feeling unwell. Usually, a rash on the face appears that is very red with a “slapped cheek” appearance. A few days later a red, lace-like rash develops on the trunk, arms and legs. The rash may be itchy. It can fade but may come and go over the next 1-3 weeks.

Parvovirus B19 can also infect adults. Adults may experience fever and joint pain. It can also cause anemia and other complications.

About half of women of childbearing age have had parvovirus B19 in early life and have developed immunity to this virus. However if a woman is infected with the virus for the first time during pregnancy, there is a very small risk that her infant may be affected. If you are pregnant, follow up with your doctor/health care provider. It is not necessary to be excluded from your workplace if you are pregnant. The decision to stay away is a personal choice for a woman to make after discussing the risks with her doctor and employer.

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For more information

Durham Region Health Department

905-666-6241 1-800-841-2729 durham.ca

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



How is it treated?

Fifth disease is caused by a virus. There is no treatment. There is no need to stay out of school or work.

How can I protect myself?

- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water or use hand sanitizers when hands are not visibly dirty.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow and encourage others to do the same.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Do not share water bottles, straws, eating utensils, cigarettes, toothbrushes, toys or anything else that has been in contact with saliva, nose or throat secretions.
- If you are ill, stay at home and isolate yourself from others.

March 2019

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