

FACT SHEET

FIFTH DISEASE

(Erythema Infectiosum, Parvovirus B-19)

<i>What is fifth disease?</i>	Fifth disease is a common childhood rash illness caused by a virus. It is usually mild and does not last long.
<i>How is it spread?</i>	It is spread through the air by droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes and it can be spread by direct contact with infected nose and throat secretions.
<i>What is the incubation period?</i>	It usually takes about 4-14 days after contact for symptoms to appear, but it may take as long as 21 days.
<i>What are the early signs?</i>	The first sign is usually a very red rash on the face (called a “slapped cheek” appearance), followed by a lace-like rash on the trunk and extremities. The rash may fade and reappear when exposed to sunlight or heat. Complications are rare and generally mild. Fever is uncommon except in adults.
<i>What about contacts?</i>	With the first sign of symptoms, parents should consult with their family physician to rule out other serious rash illness. Pregnant women who are exposed to or contract fifth disease should consult with their physician.
<i>How long is the person contagious?</i>	Fifth disease is contagious for a few days before the rash starts. It is no longer contagious once the rash appears.
<i>When is it OK to return to daycare/school?</i>	Since the disease is no longer contagious once the rash appears, children who feel well don’t need to be excluded from school. Usually no treatment is needed.
<i>Other important information</i>	To prevent the spread of disease, practice good hand-washing, cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, and dispose of used tissues into the wastebasket.

This fact sheet is not intended to replace the advice of your physician. Parents should contact their healthcare provider if they have concerns regarding their child’s health. If you have general questions, contact a Kalamazoo County nurse at 373-5264 or 373-5267.