

### What is fifth disease?

Fifth Disease also known as erythema infectiosum is an infectious disease. Fifth disease is caused by parvovirus B19 and is a mild rash illness that is more common in children than adults. After getting infected with parvovirus persons generally become sick with fifth disease within four to 14 days.

### What are the symptoms?

Signs and symptoms of fifth disease are normally mild and include: fever, runny nose, headache, and rash, but in some cases, symptoms can be more severe to include seizures, and coma. The rash is the most recognizable feature of fifth disease and can appear on your face called “slapped cheek”, and body. Some individuals may develop a second rash after a few days on their chest, back, buttocks, or arms and legs. The rash may be itchy, with different intensity. As the rash begins to disappear it may look lacy. Other Signs and symptoms may include painful or swollen joints known as polyarthropathy syndrome. This is more common in adults, specifically in women and generally goes away without any long-term problems.

### How long does this disease last?

A person usually gets sick with fifth disease within 14 days after getting infected with parvovirus B19. The contagious period for fifth disease ends after individuals develop the rash. Therefore, it is regularly safe for persons to go back to work or school. However, individuals with weakened immune systems who develop fifth disease may be contagious for a longer period.

### How is fifth disease spread?

Fifth disease spreads through respiratory secretions including saliva, sputum, or nasal mucus, when a person infected with Parvovirus B19 coughs or sneezes. The most contagious period occurs before an individual develops the rash or joint pain and swelling; at this point they may have mild signs of a fever or cold. Once an individual develops a rash, they may not be contagious. The parvovirus B19 that causes fifth disease may also spread through blood or blood products, an infected pregnant woman can pass the virus to her baby. After persons recover from fifth disease, they develop immunity against parvovirus B19 infection in the future.

### Who is at risk for fifth disease?

Fifth disease is usually mild for children and adults who are otherwise healthy. But for some people, fifth disease infection can cause serious health complications, such as chronic anemia, that requires medical treatment. Individuals with a weakened immune system caused by leukemia, cancer, organ transplants, or HIV infection may be at risk for serious complications from fifth disease.



### **What preventive measures and treatments are available?**

Fifth disease is generally mild and will disappear on its own. Healthy individuals commonly recover completely. Treatment includes relieving symptoms, like fever, itching, and joint pain and swelling. No vaccine or medicine is available to prevent fifth disease. However, preventive measures to reduce your chance of being infected or infecting others include:

- Handwashing with soap and water
- Covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
- Avoiding close contact with sick people
- Staying home when you are sick

### **What should schools do?**

After parents report a fifth disease infection to designated staff members of the school, schools should:

- Report the infection to the school nurse or designated person for decision making
- Notify exposed family and staff to watch for symptoms
- Communicate with health care providers.

### **What are recommendations for exclusion?**

Exclusion is not needed unless the individual:

- Has a blood disorder including sickle cell disease or is immune-compromised which may make the child shed large amounts of virus and become more ill, OR
- Is unable to participate comfortably in activities as determined by staff and teachers, or that they are unable to care for the child, and without compromising their ability to care for other children's health and safety OR
- Has a fever, and/or behavior change. Individuals may return from exclusion when they are healthy enough to participate and staff/teachers determine it is safe to care for the child without compromising the health and safety of other children.

For more information, visit [About Fifth Disease | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/parvovirusb19/about-parvovirus.html). <https://www.cdc.gov/parvovirusb19/about-parvovirus.html>

