

“FIFTH DISEASE”
(Erythema Infectiosum, Parvovirus B19)

IMMUNIZATION: None

INCUBATION PERIOD: Usually 4 to 14 days; may be as long as 28 days.

SYMPTOMS: May include low grade fever, nonspecific headache and tiredness; within the next week, a red rash generally appears on the face giving a “slapped cheek” appearance. The rash may then extend to the body and tends to fade and reappear. Sometimes, the rash is lacy in appearance and may be itchy. The rash may persist for over a week, and may recur in response to sunlight or a warm bath. Some persons may have vague signs of illness or no symptoms at all.

PERIOD OF COMMUNICABILITY: Infectious for 1-3 days prior to the onset of the rash. Persons with suppressed immune systems who have chronic infection and severe anemia may be communicable for months to years.

MODE OF TRANSMISSION: Primarily by direct contact with discharges from respiratory tract of infected persons.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE: No exclusion is necessary - may exclude for elevated temperature.

CONTACTS/FOLLOW-UP: No restrictions. For many years, “Fifth Disease” was viewed as an unimportant rash illness of children. Recent studies have shown that the virus may be responsible for serious complications in persons with chronic red blood cell disorders, persons with impaired immune systems. Pregnant women should be informed of the relatively low potential risks to the fetus and to contact their physician. When outbreaks occur in situations where there is prolonged contact, such as in homes, schools and day care centers, the above high risk persons should contact their physician for advice.