



# PEDIATRIC HEALTHCARE UNLIMITED

## Fifth Disease (Erythema Infectiosum)

### DEFINITION

#### Diagnostic Findings

- Bright red or rosy rash on both cheeks for 1 to 3 days ("slapped cheek" appearance)
- Rash on cheeks is followed by pink "lacelike" (or "netlike") rash on extremities
- "Lacey" rash mainly on thighs and upper arms; comes and goes several times over 1 to 3 weeks
- No fever or low-grade fever (less than 101° F [38.4° C])

#### Similar Conditions

Fifth disease was so named because it was the fifth pink-red infectious rash to be described by physicians. The other four are

1. Scarlet Fever
2. Measles
3. Rubella
4. Roseola (controversial)

#### Cause

Fifth disease is caused by the human parvovirus B19.

#### Expected Course

This is a very mild disease with either no symptoms or a slight runny nose and sore throat. The lacelike rash may come and go for 5 weeks, especially after warm baths, exercise, and sun exposure.

#### HOME CARE

**Treatment.** No treatment is necessary. This distinctive rash is harmless and causes no symptoms that need treatment.

**Contagiousness.** Over 50% of exposed children will come down with the rash in 10 to 14 days. Because the disease is mainly contagious during the week before the rash begins, a child who has the rash is no longer contagious and does not need to stay at home from school.

**Adults with Fifth Disease.** Most adults who get fifth disease develop just a mild pinkness of the cheeks or no rash at all. Adults develop joint pains, especially in the knees, more often than a rash. These pains may last 1 to 3 months. Taking a nonprescription ibuprofen product usually relieves these symptoms. An arthritis workup is not necessary for joint pains that occur after exposure to fifth disease.

**Pregnant Women Exposed to Fifth Disease.** Recent research showed that 10% of fetuses who are infected with Fifth Disease before birth develop severe anemia or may even die. This virus, however, doesn't cause any birth defects. If you are pregnant and exposed to a child with fifth disease before the child develops the rash, see your obstetrician. He or she will get a sample of your blood for an antibody test to see if you already had the disease and are protected from becoming infected again. If you do not have antibodies against fifth disease, your pregnancy will need to be monitored closely.

#### CALL OUR OFFICE

During regular hours if

- The rash becomes itchy.
- Your child develops a fever over 101° F (38.4° C).
- You feel your child is getting worse.
- You have other concerns or questions.