

## Fifth Disease

### What is Fifth Disease?

Fifth disease is a generally a mild rash childhood illness caused by a virus (parvovirus B-19). A school outbreak will infect 10-60% of children.

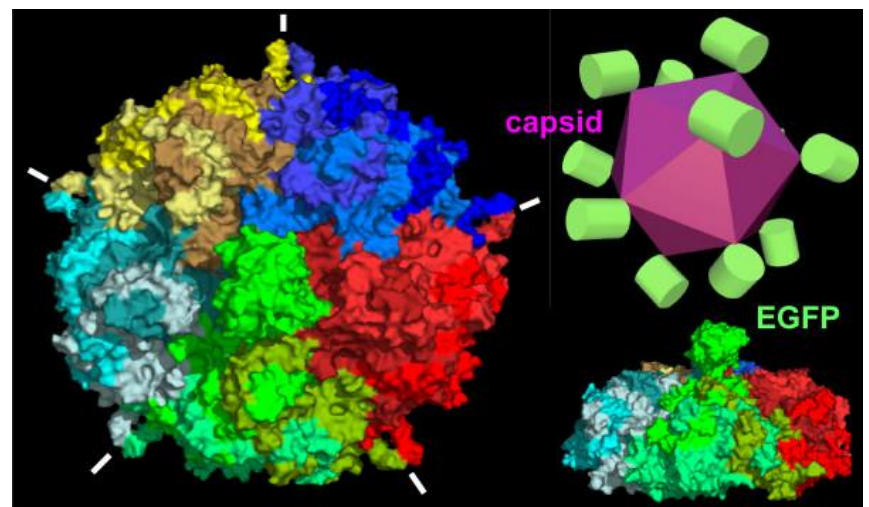


Image: National Institute of Health (NIH.gov)

What is striking in newly infected children is a “slapped cheek” appearance and a lacy rash around the trunk, down the legs and arms.

**Children are most infectious before the rash appears.**

### How is Fifth Disease Transmitted:

- The virus is spread through airborne droplets or aerosols from the mouth and throat (especially coughing and sneezing) and contact with infected respiratory secretions.
- It can also be spread from mother to fetus. **This is another illness that can be much more severe in adults than children.**



Image: Microsoft clipart

### What are Symptoms in Adults?



Image: Creative Commons: daskar's photostream

- Many adults (50-80%) were infected as kids and have immunity.
- **Susceptible adults (never exposed as children)** who are newly infected sometimes develop the rash –more common is joint swelling, pain and an arthritis (mostly in the hands, wrists, and knees) that lasts for weeks or, months.

- A newly infected mother whose fetus becomes infected may develop anemia and a swelling of the fetus leading to many organ complications.



Microsoft clipart

Exposure may cause miscarriage.

- Susceptible persons with sickle cell anemia and immune system problems may develop chronic anemia.

### **Treatment/Prevention:**

- There is no vaccine or established treatment.
- Some experts recommend that exposed pregnant women be offered a test to determine if they have natural antibodies to the virus. If they do have antibodies, they have immunity and nothing to worry about. If they are susceptible and there is an outbreak of Fifth's Disease in the school or workplace, they should consult their physician and union about the possibility of reassignment.
- Adults with joint pain and swelling may need rest, restriction of activities and medicines such as aspirin or ibuprofen.
- Persons with immune problems may need special medical care.



Image: Microsoft clipart

- Most effective strategy to reduce exposure is frequent hand-washing and cough etiquette.

**Is there an OSHA standard? No**