



Fifth Disease (Parvovirus B19) and Pregnancy

What is Fifth Disease?

- Fifth Disease is caused by a virus called Parvovirus B19.
- It is a mild rash illness that occurs most commonly in children.
- It can be a concern for pregnant women, people with blood disorders, and people who have problems with their immune system.
- If a pregnant woman becomes infected in the first 20 weeks of her pregnancy, there is a small chance that she could infect the developing baby and cause the baby to develop anemia.
- This occurs in less than 5% of all pregnant women who are infected and occurs more often in the first half of the pregnancy.
- There is no evidence that Fifth Disease causes physical or mental birth defects.
- If you're in the first half of your pregnancy and think you have Fifth Disease see your family doctor.
- Women in the first half of pregnancy should also see their family Doctor if they have been in contact with someone diagnosed with Fifth Disease.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Begins with a slight fever, runny nose and headache but most children do not feel sick.
- A bright red rash appears on the cheeks, followed 1-4 days later by a lace-like rash on the arms, body and legs.
- Rash can last 1-3 weeks and may worsen if exposed to heat and sunlight.
- At least 50% of pregnant women have had Fifth Disease in childhood and will not get it again if exposed to a child with the infection.
- Those adults who catch Fifth Disease may not get a rash but

may have mild joint pain for about two weeks.

How is it spread?

- Usually spreads through the air in contact with nasal secretions the same way as a cold virus, when an infected person sneezes, coughs or talks.
- Can be spread by hands or objects touched by an infected person.

How common is Fifth Disease?

- Fifth Disease commonly occurs in children, especially in the winter and spring.
- Studies show that previously exposed adults have developed immunity against fifth disease.

Recommended Absence

- Exclusion of children with Fifth Disease from school or day-care is not recommended
- The reason for no exclusion is that the child is most contagious before the rash appears

Can I prevent Fifth Disease?

- There is no treatment for Fifth Disease and no vaccine is available.
- Practice good personal hygiene and good hand washing.
- Cover nose and mouth while coughing and sneezing using inner elbow or tissues. Dispose of tissues carefully and wash hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

For further information contact the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit at www.hnhu.org

