Fifth Disease (Parvovirus B19)

What is it?

• Fifth disease is sometimes called “slapped cheek” syndrome because of the red rash it causes. It is a common infection of the airway and lungs.
• It’s most common in late winter to early spring.

Signs and symptoms?

• There may be no symptoms or mild symptoms that may include: Low-grade fever, headache, mild cold-like symptoms, upset stomach, sometimes joint pain or swelling.
• It starts as a very red rash on the cheeks that looks like the face has been slapped.
• After 7 to 10 days, a red, lace-like rash appears, first on the torso and arms, and then spreads to the rest of the body.
• The rash may last from 1 to 3 weeks, rash may come and go. It can be worse with changes in temperature, exposure to sun, and exercise.

How does it spread?

• This virus spreads:
  • By touching the hands of someone who has the infection and then putting your hands in your mouth.
  • By touching an object (such as a toy) that has been touched by someone who has the infection and then putting your hands in your mouth.
  • By coming in contact with the virus in the air, after an infected person has coughed or sneezed.
  • The virus is most contagious a few days before the rash starts. Once the rash appears, your child can no longer pass it to anyone else.
  • This virus can spread from a pregnant woman to her unborn child.

How to decrease the spread?

• Handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of infection.
• Careful disposal of used facial tissue.
• Not sharing drinking cups or eating utensils.
• Covering nose and mouth while coughing and sneezing.

Pregnant Women

• If you’re pregnant and develop a rash or have sore joints and have been exposed to someone with fifth disease (or to anyone with an unusual rash), call your health care professional.

Recommended Absence:

Only when the child is not well enough to participate or according to your policy. Your child can attend school while they have the rash.

Fifth disease is not reportable to Medical Officer of Health.

Resources:

www.aboutkidshealth.ca
www.caringforkids.cps.ca

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