

# Fifth Disease

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School Name  
School Nurse Name  
Phone Number  
Date

Dear Parent or Guardian,

This letter is to inform you that an individual at school has been diagnosed with fifth disease. For confidentiality purposes, no further information can be provided regarding the case but you are receiving this letter for general reference due to the risk of your child possibly having been exposed. Fifth disease is a common childhood rash illness that is typically not serious.

**What is fifth disease?** Fifth disease is caused by a virus called parvovirus B19 and can sometimes be referred to as “slapped cheek disease” because of its most recognized feature, a bright red rash on the face.

**What are the symptoms?** Fifth disease often starts like any other virus, with fever, headache, and muscle aches. A bright red rash appears on the cheeks and then a second, lace-like rash can sometimes appear on the trunk, arms, buttocks, thighs, and even soles of the feet. The rash can be itchy but typically resolves after about a week but can reappear (without illness) for weeks afterward, particularly when exposed to heat.

**How is it treated?** Fifth disease is usually mild and only requires home-care measures that help alleviate symptoms. If you suspect your child may have fifth disease, contact their pediatrician to discuss their specific symptoms to determine a treatment plan.

**What are the risks?** For healthy individuals, fifth disease is not serious and resolves on its own. For individuals with blood disorders or weakened immune systems, the virus poses more risk for

developing complications, and healthcare providers should be notified immediately when fifth disease is suspected.

**How does it spread?** Fifth disease is spread during the early stage of illness through direct contact (respiratory droplets) or contaminated surfaces. Symptoms usually appear 4–14 days after exposure has occurred. Once the rash appears, the individual is no longer contagious.

**How long should children with fifth disease stay away from school?** Children with fifth disease can return to school once the rash appears because at this point, they are no longer contagious. They should feel well enough to be in school and meet all other exclusion criteria (including fever).

**What should you do now?** Monitor your child for symptoms of fifth disease and notify your child’s pediatrician and school nurse if, at any time, you suspect your child may be infected. To help prevent spread, encourage good hand washing habits, disinfect surfaces, discourage sharing of food and beverages, and teach appropriate sneeze and cough hygiene to your child.

Thank you for your careful attention to the information in this notice and for your diligence in helping to keep our school community as safe and healthy as possible. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to the school nurse with any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

School Nurse Name