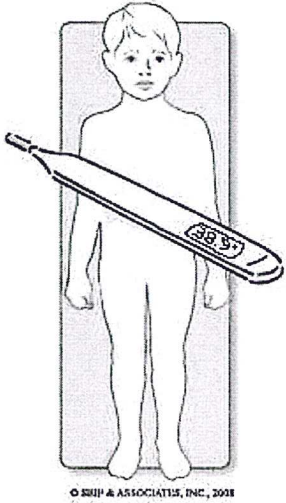


# Fifth Disease, Pediatric

Fifth disease is a viral infection that causes mild cold-like symptoms and a rash. It is more common in children than adults.

For most children, fifth disease is not a serious infection. Symptoms usually go away in 7–10 days, though the rash may last a bit longer. Children who have had fifth disease are not likely to get it again.



## CAUSES

This condition is caused by a virus called parvovirus B19. The virus spreads from child to child through coughing and sneezing, similar to how the cold virus spreads.

In rare cases, the virus can also spread from a pregnant woman to her baby in the womb.

## RISK FACTORS

This condition is more likely to develop in:

- Children who are 5–15 years of age.
- Children who attend elementary or middle school, where outbreaks often occur.

The condition is more likely to occur in late winter or early spring.

## SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of this condition usually start 4–21 days after coming into contact with the virus. Symptoms may include:

- Cold-like symptoms, such as fever, runny nose, and sore throat.
- Headache.
- Feeling very tired.
- Red rash on the cheeks that usually appears 4–14 days after symptoms start. This is often called a slapped-cheek rash.
- Itchy, lacy rash that spreads to the chest, back, arms, legs, and feet.

- Muscle aches, joint pain, and joint swelling. These symptoms are rare in children.

Children who have low numbers of red blood cells (*anemia*) may develop a more serious infection. Fifth disease may cause anemia to get worse. A miscarriage is a risk if a baby is exposed in the womb to the virus that causes fifth disease. Babies exposed in the womb may develop heart problems at birth.

In some cases, there are no symptoms. Children with no symptoms can still spread the virus.

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## DIAGNOSIS

This condition may be diagnosed based on:

- Your child's symptoms, especially the slapped-cheek rash.
- Any history of your child having contact with others who are infected.

A blood test can confirm the diagnosis, but this test is rarely needed.

## TREATMENT

Usually, treatment is not needed for this condition. In most children, the cold-like symptoms will go away without treatment in 7–10 days. The rash will fade about 5–10 days after other symptoms have gone away.

Your child's health care provider may recommend supportive care at home, such as:

- Over-the-counter medicine to relieve pain and fever.
- Antihistamine medicine for an itchy rash.

Children with anemia who get fifth disease may need to be treated in a hospital. Severe anemia may require a blood transfusion.

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## HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Have your child rest until he or she feels better.
- Give over-the-counter and prescription medicines only as told by your child's health care provider.
- **Do not** give your child aspirin because of the association with Reye syndrome.
- Have your child drink enough fluid to keep his or her urine clear or pale yellow.
- Keep your child at home until the cold-like symptoms are gone. Once these symptoms are gone, your child can no longer spread the infection to others. This is true even if your child still has a rash.

## SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your child's symptoms get worse.
- Your child's rash becomes itchy.
- Your child has a fever.
- Your child develops joint pain or swelling.
- You are pregnant and you develop symptoms of fifth disease.

## SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your child who is younger than 3 months has a temperature of 100°F (38°C) or higher.

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This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.

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