

Fifth Disease

Also called: Erythema infectiosum

Fifth disease is a viral infection caused by parvovirus B19. The virus only infects humans - it's not the same parvovirus that you vaccinate your dog or cat against. Fifth disease mostly affects children.



Symptoms can include a low fever, cold symptoms and a red rash on the cheeks, arms, legs and trunk. Adults who get it might also have joint pain and swelling.

It is easy to catch fifth disease. Infected people have the virus in their saliva and mucus. You can get it when you come into contact with those fluids.

Frequently washing your hands might help prevent getting the virus. Most people become immune to the virus after having it once.

Fifth disease is usually mild and goes away on its own. However, it can be serious if you

- Are pregnant
- Are anemic
- Have cancer or a weak immune system

Text is public domain by MedlinePlus (www.medlineplus.gov) This handout, created by Healthy Roads Media (www.healthyroadsmedia.org), can be freely distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/us>)

Last reviewed 2012