



Sequatchie Valley Planning & Development Agency
Sequatchie Valley Head Start

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Dear Parent or Guardian:

_____ A child in our center has Fifth disease.

_____ Your child may have Fifth disease.

Information about Fifth Disease:

What is Fifth Disease? Fifth disease is a mild rash illness that occurs most commonly in children. The sick child typically has a “slapped cheek” rash on the face and a lacey red rash on the trunk and limbs. Occasionally, the rash may itch. The child may have a low-grade fever, tiredness, or a cold a few days before the rash breaks out. The child is usually not very sick, and the rash resolves in 7 to 10 days. Fifth disease is caused by infection with human parvovirus B19 that infects only humans. It cannot be caught from a pet cat or dog with the parvovirus. Fifth disease is contagious, but the person infected with it is contagious during the early part of the illness, before the rash appears. By the time a child has the characteristic “slapped cheek” rash of Fifth disease, he or she is probably no longer contagious and may return to school or the childcare center. This contagious period is different than that for many other rash illnesses, such as measles, for which the child is contagious while he or she has the rash.

How is it spread? Fifth disease is probably spread from person to person by direct contact with respiratory secretions, such as sharing drinking cups or utensils.

How is it diagnosed? A physician can often diagnose Fifth disease by seeing the typical rash during a physical exam. In cases in which it is important to confirm the diagnosis, a blood test may be done.

Is Fifth disease serious? Fifth disease is usually a mild illness that resolves on its own among children and adults who are otherwise healthy. Joint pain and swelling, which can occur in adults with fifth disease, usually resolve without long-term disability.

The infection may cause a serious illness in persons with sickle-cell disease or similar types of chronic anemia. In this case see your physician for further treatment options.