

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



COUNTY MICHIGAN
HEALTH DIVISION

Department of Health & Human Services

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Fifth Disease

What is Fifth Disease?

Fifth disease is a virus which causes a rash and sometimes affects red blood cells. For many years, Fifth Disease was viewed as an unimportant illness of children. Recently, studies have shown that the virus may cause problems in some people who are immunosuppressed, are pregnant or have some kinds of anemias (low red blood cell counts).

Who gets Fifth Disease?

Anyone can get it, but the disease is seen more often in elementary school-age children.

What are the symptoms?

- Fever
- Tiredness
- Lacy red rash on the cheeks which may spread to the body. The rash may itch.

How long after exposure do symptoms first begin?

One to two weeks after exposure, the fever and tiredness may begin. By the third week, the rash generally appears. The rash may fade and reappear for several weeks, especially when the skin is warmed by the sun or a bath.

How is it spread?

Fifth Disease is spread through sneezing and coughing.

How long is the person contagious?

People with Fifth Disease may spread the virus before the rash begins. By the time the rash is present, the person is usually not contagious.

What are the complications associated with Fifth Disease?

There are only occasional complications from Fifth Disease. Pregnant women who come in contact with the virus should call their doctor. Most pregnant women will not be affected, but there is a rare chance of miscarriage. Severe anemia can develop in people with chronic red blood cell disorders (like sickle cell anemia) and immunodeficient people (like those on chemotherapy or with AIDS).

What is the treatment?

At this time there is no treatment.

What can be done to prevent the spread of Fifth Disease?

Ways to stop Fifth Disease have not been established. During outbreaks in schools, pregnant school employees and people with chronic red blood cell disorders should talk with their doctors for advice. It is very important to wash hands often, especially after touching droplets from the mouth and nose. Cough or sneeze into a tissue and throw it in the trash right away.

OVER



HAND WASHING INSTRUCTIONS:

- use soap and running water
- rub your hands vigorously for 20 seconds
- wash all surfaces, including:
 - backs of hands
 - wrists
 - between fingers
 - under fingernails
- rinse well
- dry hands with a paper towel
- turn off the water using a paper towel instead of bare hands

For more information on Fifth Disease, call (248) 858-1406 or toll free 1 (800) 848-5533.

For additional copies, visit our website at www.oakgov.com/health or contact: