



INFORMATION SHEET Fifth Disease

Fifth disease is a viral illness, which is especially common in children between the ages of 5 and 15, although adults can also contract the disease. Outbreaks tend to occur in the late winter and early spring.

Fifth disease begins with a low-grade fever, headache, and mild cold-like symptoms. These symptoms generally are mild and do not cause the child to complain. The symptoms pass, and the illness seems to be gone, until a rash appears a few days later. Normally, the bright red rash appears on the face first, and gives the child a “slapped cheek” appearance. Later the rash spreads and extends down to the trunk, arms, and legs. The rash may appear worse if the child is exposed to sunlight, heat, exercise, and stress. It may take up to 1-3 weeks for the rash to completely clear.

In teenagers and adults, joint swelling or pain can follow an attack of fifth disease. The hands, wrists, knees, and ankles are most often affected.

Fifth disease is highly contagious and spreads easily through coughing, sneezing, or shared drinking glasses or utensils. Once someone has had Fifth disease, they develop immunity and will not usually become infected again. Good hand washing is one of the best defenses against the disease.

Due to the large numbers of students in our school district, who currently are experiencing out-breaks of Fifth disease, the physicians of Plum Creek Medical Group are recommending the following:

1. Students will not be required to stay home from school if their only symptom is a red, lacy-type rash, appearing on the cheeks, arms, legs, or trunk of the body. Once the rash appears, the person is no longer considered contagious.
2. Students could be required to stay home, after consulting their Dr. if they have a rash and a fever, sore throat, headache, upset stomach, fatigue, or other symptoms.
3. Anyone who is pregnant (parents, teachers, students) or persons with compromised immune systems, who come in contact with Fifth disease, should consult their physician.

If you have questions regarding Fifth disease and your student, please feel free to contact your Doctor, your student’s teacher, or the school nurses at 308-324-1219.