

# CARING FOR YOUR CHILD WITH FIFTH DISEASE



The rash of fifth disease looks as if a cheek was slapped or wind-burned. The rash sometimes spreads to other parts of the body.



Rest is usually all it takes to feel better from this viral infection. The rash and any aches and pains will go away after 5 to 10 days.

## What Is Fifth Disease?

Fifth disease is a mild, infectious viral illness that occurs in outbreaks, often during the winter and spring. The face has a characteristic rash. The name of the illness relates to its place in a list of childhood diseases developed in the early 1980s. It affects mostly children 5 to 14 years old.

Fifth disease can't be prevented, and children aren't contagious after the rash appears. People usually won't get fifth disease a second time, because immunity to the virus develops.

Healthy people rarely have complications, but children with sickle cell anemia have an increased risk of complications. A pregnant woman has a small risk of miscarriage if infection occurs during the first trimester.

## What Causes Fifth Disease?

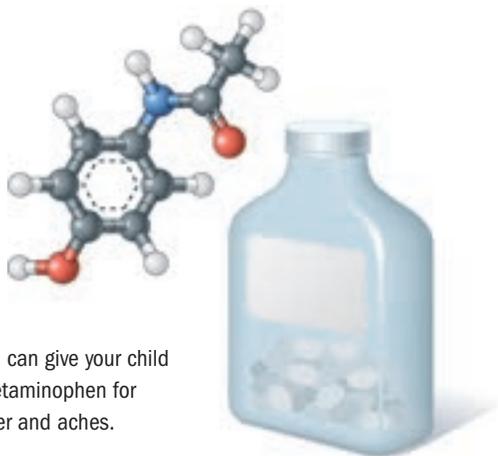
The cause is a virus called human parvovirus B19. It spreads by means of particles in the air.

## What Are the Symptoms of Fifth Disease?

Symptoms usually appear 4 to 14 days after a child is exposed to someone with the disease. Symptoms, which usually last 5 to 10 days, include a fiery red rash on the cheeks that makes the cheek look like it was slapped. The rash then spreads to the rest of the body and has a lacy look to it. Slight tiredness, headache, and itching may occur. Some people have a fever. Adults may have mild pain and swelling in the joints. Many people have no symptoms.

## How Is Fifth Disease Diagnosed?

The health care provider will diagnose fifth disease on the basis of the physical examination and history. Blood tests aren't usually needed.

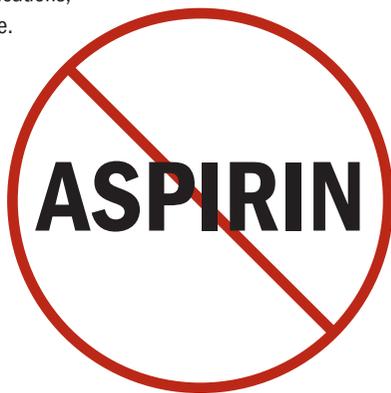


You can give your child acetaminophen for fever and aches.



Have your child drink plenty of liquids.

Don't give your child aspirin! It can cause dangerous complications, such as Reye's syndrome.



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## NOTES

## How Is Fifth Disease Treated?

No specific treatment is needed, but symptoms can be controlled. Nonaspirin products (e.g., acetaminophen) can be given for fever and aches. Don't give aspirin to a child with fifth disease. Aspirin can lead to a serious complication called Reye's syndrome.

## DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Fifth Disease:

- ✓ **DO** have your child rest during the early days of the illness.
- ✓ **DO** have your child drink plenty of liquids.
- ✓ **DO** use cool cloths or calamine lotion if the rash itches.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if symptoms get worse with normal treatment.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if your child gets symptoms of Reye's syndrome, such as vomiting, restlessness, irritability, and a decrease in the level of consciousness.
  
- ⊗ **DON'T** give aspirin to a child with fifth disease.
- ⊗ **DON'T** worry if the rash recurs after the illness is over, especially during exposure to the sun and temperature changes.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

### Contact the following sources:

- National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases  
Tel: (301) 496-5717  
**Website:** <http://www3.niaid.nih.gov>
- The American Academy of Pediatrics  
Tel: (847) 434-4000  
**Website:** <http://www.aap.org>
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development  
Tel: (800) 370-2943  
**Website:** <http://www.nichd.nih.gov>