

SLAPPED CHEEK, PARVOVIRUS B19, FIFTH DISEASE, ERYTHEMA INFECTIOSUM

What is it?

Slapped Cheek is sometimes called Fifth Disease or Erythema Infectiosum. It is an infection caused by a virus called Parvovirus B19 which only affects humans.

It most commonly occurs in children aged 4-14. The reason for it being called Fifth Disease is that it is the fifth most common childhood infection. Once someone has had Slapped Cheek they will not catch it again.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms include:

- High Temperature/ Mild fever
- Runny nose
- Red cheeks - this symptom is most common in children and is the reason for the infection's other name "*slapped cheek syndrome*"
- Rash - a lace-like red rash usually on the limbs and across the shoulders
- Joint aches and pains

Is it infectious?

Yes. It is spread by respiratory droplets which are released into the air when someone who is infected coughs or sneezes. It can be infectious for two weeks before signs and symptoms become apparent however once the rash has appeared the risk of passing on the infection drops dramatically.



What is the Incubation period?

The time taken from contact with the virus until the illness starts varies from 4–20 days. Small outbreaks amongst children can occur and are usually more common in the springtime.

Who can be more seriously affected by it?

In pregnant women, like some other infections, this virus may affect the unborn child. Most women are immune to this virus but it is best to be safe, therefore if you are pregnant try and avoid contact with people who have Slapped Cheek. If you think you may have been in contact with Slapped Cheek please contact your midwife who may need to carry out a blood test to detect the presence of antibodies to the virus.

In children who have rare types of hereditary anaemia, the virus can cause the anaemia to become much worse and parents should contact their doctor for advice.

Is there any treatment?

Slapped Cheek is a mild illness and no treatment is usually required - although pain relief i.e. paracetamol, ibuprofen may help ease the symptoms and reduce a high temperature. As it is caused by a virus, antibiotics won't help to treat it. At present there is no vaccine available for the prevention of this virus.

How soon can someone return to school or work?

As soon as they feel physically well and the symptoms have subsided.

