



Parvovirus 19- “Fifth’s Disease”

Erythema infectiosum (Fifth’s Disease) is an infection that causes a rash, fever and other symptoms. It is caused by a virus called “human parvovirus 19” (Parvo). This virus is common in children. Adults may also get it.

Most people come in contact with Parvo at some point in their life, especially if they work with young children or in crowds. Almost ½ of pregnant women have been exposed and are immune. This means they are unlikely to get sick with it again. There is no medication to treat Parvo and most people get better by themselves. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) may be used in pregnancy for reducing fever and aches. Antibiotics do not work on Parvo.

Many people who get Parvo have no or mild symptoms. This can include: Fever, muscle/joint aches, rash, headache, sore throat, itching, cough, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, sneezing, and eye infections. These first symptoms last 2-5 days then may be replaced with a rash on the face called a “slapped cheek” rash. Then a “lace-like” rash may develop on the chest, back, arms and legs usually after the facial rash. Joint pain is more common in adults than children. Children often feel better by the time the rash appears, and the rash may go away and come back with stress and exercise. Patients are usually considered infectious until they get the rash or joint pain.

If you think you have been exposed to Parvo when you are pregnant, let our clinic know and we will test your blood for immunity or active infection. If you test positive for an active infection, there is a small risk of anemia for the baby. The baby may need more monitoring by ultrasound. There is usually **no** increased risk of developmental (learning) delays or baby defects associated with a Parvo infection.

You can lower your chance of getting Parvo by washing your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol hand rub. Teach your children to do the same. Do not share food and drinks with other people.

Reference: UpToDate Patient Information: Erythema Infectiosum (fifth disease-the basics) April 6, 2012

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