



## FORM ADMIN 422-01 Fifth Disease

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### FIFTH DISEASE

**Date**

Dear Colleagues:

We have a confirmed case of fifth disease, a commonly occurring childhood illness with mild symptoms, at our location. The Health Unit has provided the following information about this disease.

#### **What is fifth disease?**

Fifth disease is a viral infection caused by parvovirus B19.

#### **What are the signs and symptoms?**

A red rash on the face, making the cheeks look like they have been slapped is characteristic, though this symptom is often absent in adults. One to four days later, a red lace-like rash appears, first on the arms and then on the rest of the body. The rash may last weeks to months and fluctuate in intensity. A brief illness or fever, headache, muscle aches and tiredness may occur 7-10 days before the rash. The time from exposure to first symptom is 4-20 days with rash occurring 2-3 weeks after exposure.

#### **How is the disease spread?**

The virus spreads the same way as a cold virus; on the hands of someone who has the infection, on something that has been touched by someone who has the infection, or in the air by sneezing. People cannot spread the disease by the time the rash appears but do so before this time.

#### **How common is fifth disease?**

Fifth disease commonly occurs in children, especially in the winter and spring seasons when the disease is widespread in the community. By adulthood 50-80% of people have been infected with fifth disease and will not get it again if exposed.

#### **Is this a serious disease?**

Up to one quarter of infections produce no symptoms. The disease is mild for healthy children and most adults. Adults with the disease may have painful joints that can last for months. The infection may be more serious for children and adults with chronic forms of anemia or who are immune-suppressed. There is a very slight chance that infection in the first 20 weeks of pregnancy can cause severe anemia in the fetus. If you are in the first half of your pregnancy, see your family doctor.

#### **Can I prevent fifth disease?**

There is no treatment or vaccine for fifth disease. Practice good personal hygiene. Frequent hand washing is the most effective way of preventing the spread of the fifth disease and many other diseases. Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing. Children with the rash may continue to attend school if feeling well enough to take part in the activities since they are no longer able to spread fifth disease.

**For more information about fifth disease contact: Moose Cree First Nation Public Health at 658-4220 or Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000.**



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Dear Parent/Guardian,

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