

GRANVILLE EXEMPTED VILLAGE SCHOOLS
SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES
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FIFTH DISEASE

Fifth Disease is a contagious disease caused by a virus that usually becomes noticeable when a rash appears. It is a rather mild disease in most children, but in those with blood-related disorders, it may be more serious. Since children are most capable of spreading the disease in the 5 days before the rash appears and to a lesser extent, 2 days after it appears, it is not necessary to keep them at home for more than 2 days, unless they have other symptoms. Further information about the disease follows.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Fifth Disease may occur with no symptoms, with fever and flu-like symptoms only, or may produce a rash. The rash begins with a sudden appearance of an intense redness of the cheeks, giving a "slapped cheek" appearance. Mild fever may be present. Rash spreads to the trunk and limbs and is slightly itchy. It soon fades in the center, giving a lacy appearance. The rash usually disappears within a week, but it may reappear during periods of exercise, warm baths, rubbing the skin, or emotional upset. The rash may come and go for several weeks.

MODE OF TRANSMISSION

The disease is spread from person to person usually by respiratory secretions, thus careful hand washing, care in handling soiled tissues, coughing into shoulders or covering coughs and sneezes is important.

PERIOD OF COMMUNICABILITY

The rash usually occurs after the disappearance of the viral disease, thus the highest period of contagiousness is in the 5 days before the onset of the rash and, to a lesser degree, 2 days after.

INCUBATION PERIOD

The time from exposure until the individual has the first symptoms is anywhere from 4 to 14 days, usually 12 to 14 days.

TREATMENT

No treatment is given. In cases of blood-related disorders or pregnancy, the individual should consult his/her personal physician. Approximately 50% of adults are immune to this virus; a small percentage of pregnant women exposed in their first 20 weeks of pregnancy may experience difficulties, however.

If you have questions or have a child with the disease, please call your school nurse. Thank you for your help in preventing the spread of this illness.