Dear parent or guardian:

Your child recently may have been exposed to **fifth disease**. Fifth disease is a common childhood rash caused by a virus. It is also known as “slapped cheek disease” because it often starts as a dramatic rash on the cheeks. Children with fifth disease typically don’t need to stay home from school or childcare because they aren’t contagious once the rash appears.

# Symptoms

Symptoms may begin with fever, muscle aches, and headache.

After 1–3 weeks, a bright red rash appears on the cheeks. Then a lace-like rash appears on the trunk, arms, buttocks, and thighs. The rash may disappear and reappear after exposure to heat for several weeks.

Once the rash appears, the child usually no longer feels sick.

# Spread

Children spread fifth disease during the early part of the illness, when it seems like a cold. It is spread through mucus or saliva. Contaminated objects, like tissues, toys, drinking cups, and utensils, can spread the virus. Once the rash appears, the person is no longer contagious.

# Diagnosis and treatment

Fifth disease is usually a mild illness that doesn’t need medical care. Give comfort to help with early symptoms. Pregnant people and people with certain blood or immune disorders should notify their healthcare provider if exposed.

# Prevention

Good hygiene is the best way to prevent spreading fifth disease:

* Avoid sharing personal items, like drinking cups and utensils.
* Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and warm water. Antibacterial soap is not necessary.
* Teach children to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or their elbow.
* Wash your hands after using a tissue.
* Throw away tissues after each use.
* Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.

# Learn more

For more info, contact a healthcare provider.