

What about staying away from work, school or preschool?

Most children are no longer contagious by the time they are diagnosed, so they can attend preschool or school.

However you may want to keep children home if they feel unwell.

Do you require further information?

For further information contact:

- Your local doctor or practice nurse
- Your local Public Health Nurse
- Communicable Diseases at Community and Public Health



Other resources available on childhood infections:

- Rotavirus
- Impetigo
- Hand, foot and mouth disease
- Ringworm
- Salmonella
- Conjunctivitis
- Threadworms

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Communicable Diseases
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Slapped Cheek Disease



Canterbury

District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora ō Waitaha

What is Slapped Cheek Disease?

Slapped Cheek Disease, also known as **Fifth Disease** is a common childhood viral infection caused by human parvovirus B19.

It can spread rapidly in childcare centres and schools and occurs in the winter and spring. Epidemics occur every three to seven years.

What are the symptoms?

The early symptoms can include headache, body ache, sore throat, mild fever and chills, that last 2-3 days.

Children then develop a bright red rash on their cheeks that looks almost like slap marks.

This characteristic rash is sometimes followed by a lace-like rash on their arms and legs. Symptoms appear 4-20 days after becoming infected (usually 1-3 days) and lasts for 7-10 days.

Adults are less likely to have the rashes but sometimes get swollen and painful joints, especially in the hands and feet. If this occurs, joint pain and swelling usually last for 1-2 weeks, but may last for several months.

How is it caught?

The virus lives in the nose and throat and is spread by respiratory droplets when an infected person sneezes or coughs. It can also be transferred from mother to a developing foetus.

Cases are usually infectious before the onset of the rash and are probably not infectious after the rash appears. People with impaired immunity may be infectious for months or years.

How is it treated?

There is no specific treatment for this disease, however treatment of symptoms such as fever, pain and itching may be needed.

People with immune problems may need special medical care, including treatment with immunoglobulin (antibodies) to help their bodies get rid of the infection.

How is spread prevented?

Frequent and thorough hand washing is the most effective way of avoiding infection especially after coughing and sneezing.



Who is at risk?

The infection is usually mild, and both children and adults get better without any problems.

However persons likely to develop problems are those with blood disorders or weakened immune systems.

Specialist advice should be sought if a person with immunodeficiency or a blood disorder becomes infected

There is added risk for pregnant women. Infection during pregnancy, especially during the first half, can cause a fatal form of anaemia in the unborn child.

Pregnant women who may have been in contact with a case of parvovirus infection should consult their doctor.

Pregnant women with sick children at home are advised to wash hands frequently and avoid sharing eating utensils.

Can I get it again?

People do develop a lasting immunity that protects against future infection.