

## Parvovirus or Fifth Disease (slapped cheek)



### What is slapped cheek syndrome?

This is a viral disease due to Parvovirus B19 (fifth disease syndrome) and is spread by respiratory droplets.

### What are the symptoms?

Symptoms initially appear as:

- 'Flu-like' illness and then the
- Bright red 'slapped cheeks' rash appears followed by a reddish rash on the body. This rash may last for up to 3 weeks.
- A few children, but most adults, have mild joint pains.
- Headache
- Mild fever
- Sore throat
- Parvovirus is usually a mild illness.

Some individuals may have no symptoms at all

The illness is commonest in the four -ten year old age group and outbreaks are common in primary schools in the later winter through to early summer.

### Who is usually affected with Parvovirus?

Slapped cheek syndrome usually affects children. Studies have shown that 60% of adults in the UK have antibodies to parvovirus B19 and following infection, immunity is thought to last for life.

### What is the incubation period?

The incubation period is six -11 days.

### How can spread be prevented?

Spread is by the respiratory route and a person is infectious three to five days before the rash occurs.

Exclusion is not required as an individual is no longer infectious once the rash appears. It is difficult to avoid contact with people who have parvovirus B19 as they often have no symptoms during the infectious phase.

Request that parents notify the school of the diagnosis so that pregnant contacts can be informed.

### Pregnancy and parvovirus

Advise any members of staff who may be pregnant that they will need to see their GP or midwife as soon as possible following exposure (even if they are well). There is no routine screening test for Slapped Cheek in pregnancy so their GP may do a blood test to check for antibodies to the virus from a current or previous infection.

More information on parvovirus can be found in chapter nine of the [Health protection in schools and childcare facilities](#) guidance.