



David E. Simai M.D.

Board Certified Pediatrician

660 Central Avenue, Suite #3  
Cedarhurst, New York 11516  
Tel. (516) 374-2228  
Fax. (516) 374-2044  
Email: DrSimaiPediatrics@Gmail.Com  
Website: www.DoctorSimai.com

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## Fifths Disease

Fifth disease is caused by a virus, called parvovirus B19, which tends to spread among children in elementary school. It is most prevalent in the winter and spring, but it can spread at any time and among people of any age.

Many adults have antibodies that prevent them from developing fifth disease because of previous exposure during childhood. However, when individuals do become infected as adults, the symptoms can be severe. **When pregnant women get fifth disease for the first time in their first trimester (3 months), there are serious risks for the unborn baby.** For children with healthy immune systems, fifth disease is a common, mild illness that rarely presents lasting consequences.

The first symptoms of fifth disease are very general. They often include headache, fatigue, low-grade fever, sore throat, and nausea. After a few days of symptoms, most patients develop a red rash that first appears on the cheeks. The rash often spreads to the arms, legs, and trunk (chest and back) of the body within a few days. The rash may last for weeks, but usually **by the time you see it you are no longer contagious.** The rash is more likely to appear in children than in adults with fifth disease. If you have been exposed or infected with fifths disease today it may incubate in your body for up to 2 month before you show symptoms of a rash or cold. This is known as the incubation period.

For most patients, no treatment is necessary. If your joints hurt, have a headache or fever, you can take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin) as needed to relieve these symptoms. **To find out how much medicine to give please follow the Tylenol and Motrin dosing chart on our website [www.doctorsimai.com](http://www.doctorsimai.com).** Otherwise, you will just need to wait for your body to fight off the virus, which usually takes one to three weeks. You can help the process along by drinking a lot of fluids and getting extra rest. **Children can often return to school once the red rash appears since they are no longer contagious.**

Since fifth disease usually spreads from one person to another through airborne secretions, **you should try to minimize contact with people who are sneezing, coughing, or blowing their noses.** Washing your hands frequently can also help reduce the chances of contracting fifth disease. **Once you have contracted this virus, though, you are considered immune for life.**

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