

Disease of the month: FIFTH DISEASE. It is a usually mild illness caused by parvovirus B19. It is most common in late winter and early spring. Fifth disease is very contagious and will infect up to 60% of children that are exposed. The incubation period is 4 to 14 days. It begins with a low-grade fever, headache, and cold-like symptoms, followed days later with a “slapped cheek” rash on the face and lacy red rash on the trunk and limbs. The rash will increase with sunlight, heat, exercise, and stress and can last from 7 to 20 days. Unlike other illnesses, children are NO LONGER CONTAGIOUS once the rash appears. Children only need to stay home from school while fever is present, they can attend school with the rash. People do develop lasting immunity once infected, and 50% of adults have immunity against the virus. Infection during pregnancy carries a small risk to the unborn child. There is no vaccine available, frequent hand washing is the best prevention.