

# Donwood Elementary School

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Dear Parents/Guardians:

We have had a case of “Fifth Disease” reported in our School.

We are including the following information from the Public Health Nurse at 938-5000 regarding this medical condition. This information is particularly pertinent for pregnant women.

## **FIFTH DISEASE (ERYTHEMA INFECTIOSUM)**

### **SYMPTOMS AND CHARACTERISTICS:**

- Bright red rash of both cheeks for 1 to 3 days (“slapped cheek” appearance)
- Followed by pink “lacelike” (or “netlike”) rash of extremities
- “Lacy” rash mainly on thighs and upper arms
- “Lacy” rash that comes and goes several times over 1 to 3 weeks
- No fever or minimal one

If your child’s symptoms are different, call your physician for help. Fifth Disease was so named because it was the fifth pink-red infectious rash to be described. Despite some controversy about roseola being the fourth disease, the other 4 are:

Scarlet Fever      Measles      Rubella      Roseola

**CAUSE**– Fifth disease is caused by the human parvovirus B19.

**Expected Course** – This is a very mild disease with either no symptoms or a slight runny nose and sore throat. Complications in children are very rare. The lace-like rash can come and go for 5 weeks. Heat seems to be the main precipitant; therefore it returns following warm baths, exercise, and sun exposure.

### **CALL YOUR CHILD’S PHYSICIAN IF:**

- Your child was on any medicine when the rash began
- A fever over 101 F is present
- The rash is itchy
- You have other questions or concerns

### **HOME CARE**

**Treatment** – No treatment is necessary. This distinctive rash is harmless and causes no symptoms.

**Contagiousness** – Exposed children will come down with the rash in 10 to 14 days. Because the disease is mainly contagious during the week before the rash begins, a child who has the rash is no longer contagious and does not need to stay home from school.

**Adults with Fifth Disease** – Most adults who acquire Fifth Disease develop a mild pinkness of the cheeks or no rash whatever. More commonly, adults develop joint pains, especially of the knees. These pains may take 1 to 3 months to run their course. Taking a nonprescription ibuprofen product usually relieves symptoms.

**Pregnant Woman** – Recent research shows that some fetuses who are infected with Fifth Disease before birth can develop severe anemia (10%) or even die (2%). If you are pregnant and exposed to a child with Fifth Disease before he/she develops the rash, see your obstetrician. He or she will obtain an antibody test to see if you already had the disease and are protected. If not, your pregnancy will need to be monitored closely. The good news is that this virus doesn't cause any birth defects.

**Call Your Child's Physician Later if:**

- It becomes itchy
- A fever over 101 F occurs
- You feel your child is getting worse

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the school at 668-9438.

Yours truly,

J. Sodomlak  
Principal