Date

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Your child may have recently been exposed to **fifth disease**. Fifth disease is a common childhood rash caused by a virus. It is also known as “slapped cheek disease” because it often starts as a dramatic rash on the cheeks.

**What are the symptoms of fifth disease?**

Symptoms may begin with fever, muscles aches, and headache. One to 3 weeks later a bright red rash appears on the cheeks. A lace-like appearing rash then appears on the trunk, arms, buttocks, and thighs. The rash may disappear and reappear after exposure to heat for weeks; once the rash appears, the child no longer feels ill. People may be infected and infectious without ever having any symptoms.

**How is fifth disease spread?**

Fifth disease is spread during the early part of the illness, when it just seems like a cold. An infected person spreads the disease through mucus of saliva. Objects such as used tissues, toys, drinking cups, and utensils can spread the virus. Once the rash appears, the person is no longer contagious.

**How is fifth disease diagnosed and treated?**

A healthcare provider can usually make a diagnosis of fifth disease based on the symptoms. Fifth disease is usually a mild illness that does not need medical care. General comfort measures help with early symptoms. Pregnant women and people with certain blood or immune disorders may need medical attention.

**How do you control the spread?**

* Wash hands frequently and thoroughly, especially after touching nose or throat secretions.
* Avoid sharing personal items, like drinking cups and eating utensils.
* Use a sanitizing solution on shared toys and surfaces.
* Cover mouth with tissue or arm when coughing or sneezing.
* Properly dispose of tissues containing nose and throat secretions.
* Exclusion from school or childcare is not usually not necessary because children are not contagious once the rash appears.

**How do I get more information?**

For more information about fifth disease, contact your healthcare provider.