

For Health Professionals

Health Alerts

Health Alert Advisory #119 - Potential Increase in Patients with Fifth Disease - January 7, 2005

The Erie County Department of Health Bureau of Disease Control is currently monitoring rashes in school children consistent with Fifth disease. Emergency Departments, Urgent Care Facilities, and private practitioners are advised to familiarize themselves with the characteristics of Fifth disease and report any increase in numbers to the ECDOH at (716) 858-7697 (Monday - Friday, 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM).

Fifth disease is a mild rash illness that occurs most commonly in children. Fifth disease is caused by infection with human parvovirus B19. Symptoms are generally a "slapped-cheek" rash on the face and a lacy red rash on the trunk and limbs. Occasionally, the rash may itch. An ill child may have a low-grade fever and malaise, a few days before the rash breaks out. The child is usually not very ill, and the rash resolves in 7 to 10 days. Infected adults may also develop the typical rash of Fifth disease, joint pain or swelling, or both.

A person infected with parvovirus B19 is contagious during the early part of the illness, before the rash appears. By the time the characteristic "slapped cheek" rash appears, a child is probably no longer contagious and may return to school or child-care center. Treatment is typically relief of fever, pain, and itching.

Parvovirus B19 infection may cause a serious illness in persons with sickle-cell disease, chronic anemia, immune deficiencies, and in pregnant women. Treatment may include hospitalization for blood transfusions or treatment with immune globulin.

For additional information:

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/submenus/sub_parvovirus.htm