

**This leaflet gives general advice. For further information please ask either the nursing or medical staff who are providing your care and treatment or contact the Infection Control Team on 01386 502552.**

If you would like this leaflet in a different language, larger print size, in audio, Braille or any other format please contact the PALS team by phone on

☎ 01905 760020;

by letter ✉ Communications,  
Worcestershire Health and Care Trust,  
Isaac Maddox House, Worcester  
or by email 📧:

[WHCNHS.communications@nhs.net](mailto:WHCNHS.communications@nhs.net)



**Worcestershire  
Health and Care**  
NHS Trust



**Slapped Cheek  
Parvovirus B19, Fifth  
Disease**

***What is it?***

***Your questions answered***

**An Information Leaflet  
for  
Patients and Staff**

## WHAT IS IT?

Slapped Cheek is sometimes called Fifth Disease or Erythema Infectiosum. It is an infection caused by a virus called Parvovirus B19 which only affects humans. It most commonly occurs in children aged 4-12. The reason for it being called Fifth Disease is that it is the fifth most common childhood infection. Once someone has had Slapped Cheek they will not catch it again.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

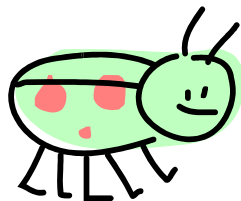
Your child may have a runny nose, rash, aches and pains and a high temperature. To begin with a rash appears on the cheeks making them look red—which is why it is called Slapped Cheek. A few days later a rash may appear on your child's chest, arms and legs. The rash may fade and then come back if your child gets hot or is in direct sunlight, this may last for up to 3 weeks. Some people can have Slapped Cheek and not have any symptoms, adults with infection may experience mild joint pain.

## IS IT INFECTIOUS?

Yes. It is spread by respiratory droplets which are released into the air when someone who is infected coughs or sneezes. It needs close, regular face to face contact e.g. child to carer etc. It can be infectious for two weeks before signs and symptoms become apparent but is no longer infectious once the rash has appeared.

## WHAT IS THE INCUBATION PERIOD?

The time taken from contact with the virus until the illness starts varies from 4—20 days. Small outbreaks amongst children can occur and are usually more common in the spring.



## WHO CAN BE MORE SERIOUSLY AFFECTED BY IT?

In pregnant women, like some other infections, this virus may affect the unborn child. Most women are immune to this virus but it is best to be safe, therefore if you are pregnant try and avoid contact with people who have Slapped Cheek. If you think you may have been in contact with Slapped Cheek please contact your midwife who may need to carry out a blood test to detect the presence of antibodies to the virus.

In children who have rare types of hereditary anaemia, the virus can cause the anaemia to become much worse and parents should contact their doctor for advice.

## IS THERE ANY TREATMENT?

Slapped Cheek is a mild illness and no treatment is usually required. As it is caused by a virus, antibiotics won't help to treat it. At present there is no vaccine available for the prevention of this virus.

## HOW SOON CAN SOMEONE RETURN TO SCHOOL OR WORK?

As soon as they feel physically well.