

Health Corner: Childhood Illness: Fifth's Disease

Written by Submitted by Robin Kent, Primary Care Associates of Leonard
Thursday, 02 June 2011 10:07 -

May 26, 2011 - Symptoms: Early symptoms of Fifth's Disease are similar to the flu. A distinctive rash follows several days later, and some people have joint pain. Fifth's Disease can be confused with other conditions with similar symptoms.

Symptoms similar to the flu: Symptoms of Fifth's Disease arise within two to three weeks after exposure to the virus. Typically, the first symptoms resemble the flu and may be so mild that they are not noticed. Some people with Fifth's Disease do not have any symptoms.

Early symptoms include:

Runny nose and sore throat.

Headache and belly pain.

In rare cases, a mild fever around 100F.

Mild body weakness and joint pain.

Rash: About seven days after the person has symptoms that seem like the flu, a distinctive rash may appear, although not as often in adults as in children. Some people never get a rash.

If a rash develops, usually it follows a predictable pattern with two or three distinct stages:

A bright red rash occurs on the sides of the face (often referred to as a "slapped-cheek" appearance) and sometimes on the forehead and chin. This rash usually fades within two to five days.

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Another rash appears on the neck, trunk, forearms, upper legs, and buttocks. This rash starts as round red spots and begins to take on a lacy look. It can be itchy, especially in older children. This second stage lasts a week or less.

After the body rash fades, it may come back after the person is out in the sun, gets too warm, or is under stress. This rash lasts one to three weeks. Even though a rash comes back, it does not mean your illness is worse.

Joint pain: Joint pain in the hands, wrists, ankles, and feet commonly occurs in adults, especially in women. The pain usually lasts one to three weeks, although in rare cases, it can last longer. It usually does not cause permanent damage to the joints.

Complications: In healthy people, Fifth's Disease usually is a mild illness that resolves within a few weeks without further problems. But people with impaired immune systems or blood disorders, such as sickle cell disease or thalassemia, are at increased risk for developing complications. Fifth disease can also cause problems for the fetus of a pregnant woman who is infected.