

What is Parvovirus B19?

Parvovirus B19 is a virus that commonly infects children (similar to measles, rubella etc). The virus is transmitted primarily by respiratory droplets (coughing and sneezing). School teachers, day-care workers, and mothers of young children are particularly likely to be exposed to this virus.

What illnesses does Parvovirus B19 cause?

Parvovirus B19 commonly causes a mild rash-like illness, usually in children. Children with Fifth Disease (also known as erythema infectiosum) typically have a "slapped cheek" rash on their face. They may also have a lacy, red rash on their torso and limbs.

In adults, Parvovirus B19 infection may cause arthralgias (painful joints) in addition to the characteristic skin rash. These symptoms are more common in adult women than in men. They usually last for 2-4 weeks but may persist for several months.

Important: Many people with Parvovirus infections show no symptoms at all. Therefore, the only way to know if a person has Parvovirus B19 infection is to test for it.

Parvovirus B19 and pregnancy

Usually exposure to this virus in pregnancy will not result in serious harm to the baby. However, in a small percentage of cases, the infection can cause the baby to become anemic. If the baby's blood count becomes too low, intrauterine death can result. Fortunately, this tragic outcome is extremely rare if the baby's infection is diagnosed promptly and treatment is instituted.

What is my status? How will I know if I am at risk of infection?

Approximately 50-60% of adults have been infected with Parvovirus at some time in the past and are immune to reinfection. A simple blood test can tell you if:

- You had this infection before and are now immune.
- You currently have the infection.
- You have not had this infection before and may be at risk of infection. Knowing your status will allow you to avoid high risk situations during pregnancy (where exposure to the virus is more likely).

What treatments are available if I get B19 infection when I am pregnant?

If the results of your blood test confirm that you have B19 infection, your doctor will monitor your pregnancy more closely. He or she may ask you to have frequent ultrasound examinations for several weeks. If the baby shows signs of severe anemia, an intrauterine blood transfusion is usually performed. This treatment is highly successful in reversing the anemia. Fortunately, the intrauterine viral infection is usually short-lived, and, after treatment, the baby almost always continues to develop normally.





For more information
on Parvovirus B19, and
Fifth Disease please ask your
healthcare provider or visit our
educational web-site at

www.fifthdisease.org

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

Parvovirus B19

*Do you
know
your
status?*

Ask your
healthcare provider
about Parvovirus B19

