

Fifth Disease And Pregnancy

Erythema Infectiosum, commonly known as Fifth Disease, or Parvovirus B-19 infection, is most frequently associated with pre-school, elementary and middle-school age children. Outbreaks occur most often in mid-winter to early summer. 60% of adolescents and adults have had it and cannot get it again. You get it through respiratory secretions and close contact. Children often have a "slapped cheek" facial rash with low-grade fever. Sometimes the rash may extend to arms, legs and trunk. Most adults do not get the rash. Flu-like symptoms and joint pain are also common for adults. It is important to note that **25% of adults will have no obvious symptoms at all**. Currently there is no vaccine for Parvo B-19.

Pregnant women most at risk of acquiring Fifth Disease are the mothers of children who have the disease, followed by teachers and health care workers. The risk of problems for the unborn baby is greatest when the mother's illness occurs within the first trimester (first 12 weeks). When exposure is suspected, (usually from close contact with a child that has Fifth Disease) a blood sample must be taken as soon as possible to test for the Parvo B-19 virus. It can take up to 7 days to receive these results from the lab, and **our office will contact you after your provider has reviewed them**.

The test determines if you have had Fifth Disease or not. It may also tell us if you have just gotten the infection. A second test two weeks later may be needed to compare results.

If the completed blood tests indicate that a woman is currently infected with the Parvo B-19 virus, a weekly series of ultrasounds (usually for about 6 weeks) must be ordered to monitor the baby. An unborn baby that has been infected with Parvo B-19 can develop a severe anemia that may cause fluid retention and swelling (a condition known as "hydrops"). The chance of developing hydrops is approximately 20% if the infection occurs in the first trimester. This percentage **decreases** the further along you are.

Please let us know if we can answer any other questions you may have about Parvo B-19 infection.