

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2017

We have had a case of **Slapped Cheek** (Human Parvovirus Infection or Erythema Infectiosum). The following information is provided for you.

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## **SLAPPED CHEEK INFECTION INFORMATION SHEET ALSO KNOWN AS HUMAN PARVOVIRUS INFECTION OR ERYTHEMA INFECTIOSUM**

### **What is slapped cheek infection?**

Erythema infectiosum, also known as 'slapped cheek disease' or 'fifth disease' is a common childhood viral infection caused by human parvovirus B19. Five to 15% of preschool children and 50–60% of all adults are immune.

### **What are the symptoms?**

Most cases experience no symptoms at all.

In children the infection causes a mild illness with little or no fever but a striking redness of the cheeks (hence 'slapped cheek disease'). This may be accompanied by a lacy looking rash that fades within a week but can re-occur over several weeks on exposure to heat or sunlight. Adults often do not have a rash but may have cold-type symptoms and sometimes painful or swollen joints over two to three days.

### **How is it spread?**

Parvovirus infection is spread by infected respiratory secretions (coughing, sneezing, or touching something that has been coughed or sneezed on). About 50% of non-immune people will become infected if there is a case in their household, less if the case is at school or child care. The incubation period of the infection is one to two weeks. Cases are infectious before the onset of the rash and are probably not infectious after the rash appears.

### **Who is at risk?**

Several groups of people are at risk from the effects of parvovirus infection on developing red blood cells:

- people with chronic blood disorders (for example, sickle cell disease) may develop severe anaemia (low blood count)
- immunosuppressed people (for example those on chemotherapy, organ transplant recipients) may develop chronic anaemia
- occasionally, an unborn baby of a non-immune mother can develop problems if infected before the 20th week of pregnancy.

### **How can I protect myself?**

Washing hands before eating or touching your face can help prevent infection. Avoid sharing cutlery or cups and plates with others.

### **What action should I take if I think I have been exposed?**

There is no specific treatment required for uncomplicated infection. Specialist advice should be sought if a person with immunodeficiency or a blood disorder suffers parvovirus infection. A pregnant woman who believes she has been in contact with a case of parvovirus infection should consult the doctor supervising her pregnancy even if she has no symptoms.