

# CANNON FALLS AREA SCHOOLS

## Health Office

*Dear Parent/Guardian: There is a child in your child's class who has been diagnosed or is suspected of having fifth disease.*

### **FIFTH DISEASE**

Fifth disease (also known as erythema infectiosum) is a mild, common rash illness caused by a virus. Outbreaks of fifth disease frequently occur in childcare settings or schools. Most people who get fifth disease do not become very ill. However, children with sickle cell anemia, chronic anemia, or an impaired immune system, may become seriously ill when infected with parvovirus B19 and require medical care. Also, see **CAUTION** section at the bottom of this form regarding risk to pregnant women.

**CAUSE:** *Human parvovirus B19*

**SYMPTOMS:** Rash, sometimes a fever or sore throat. The characteristic rash causes an intense redness of the cheeks ("slapped cheek") in children. It often begins on the cheeks and is later found on the arms, upper body, buttocks, and legs. The rash has a very fine, lacy, pink appearance. The rash around the face will fade within four days. The rash on the rest of the body usually fades within three to seven days of its appearance. However, the rash tends to come and go for days or even weeks, especially in response to sunlight or heat. Pain, redness, and swelling of joints may be a common occurrence in adults, especially women.

**SPREAD:** Most likely, when an infected person coughs or sneezes, contaminated droplets are spread into the air and inhaled by others. A person can also get infected from touching these secretions and then touching his/her mouth or nose. Fifth disease can be epidemic among children.

**INCUBATION:** It takes from 4 to 21 days (more commonly 4 to 14 days) from the time of infection until symptoms begin.

**CONTAGIOUS PERIOD:** Most contagious before onset of rash and is unlikely to be contagious after the rash has occurred.

**EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL:** If other rash-causing illnesses are ruled out, there is no need to exclude.

### **PREVENTION/CONTROL:**

1. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after contact with secretions from the nose or mouth.
2. Dispose of tissues.
3. Treatment – none.
4. Pregnant women and parents of children who have an impaired immune system, sickle cell anemia, or other blood disorders may want to consult their health care providers about exposure.

**CAUTION:** Women who get fifth disease during pregnancy (particularly within the first trimester) may have a risk (probably less than 10%) of fetal damage or fetal death. Most women are already immune to fifth disease, so they are not at risk. If you are pregnant and have been exposed to fifth disease, contact your healthcare provider for advice.