

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

SUBJECT: Fifth Disease

The Lambton Kent District School Board is committed to:

- Providing a safe and healthy work environment for its employees; and
- Taking every reasonable precaution to prevent the transmission of Fifth Disease to susceptible employees who are pregnant, have a chronic blood disorder or have depressed immune systems.

General Guidelines

Fifth Disease, also known as erythema infectiosum or "slapped cheek syndrome" is a common viral infection of the respiratory system caused by parvovirus B19. Fifth Disease is a common condition within child care settings, schools, and in the general community.

Symptoms: Children with Fifth Disease may have mild to no symptoms. Children may experience cold-like symptoms with or without a fever, prior to developing a red 'slapped cheek' appearing rash. One to four days following the rash on the cheeks, children may develop a lace-like rash on the torso, arms, and the rest of their body. The rash may be itchy, and may resolve and reappear for 1-3 weeks. Many adults with Fifth Disease are asymptomatic (without symptoms). The most common symptom in adults is joint pain.

Transmission: Fifth Disease spreads from person to person through droplets from mouth and nose. Transmission occurs prior to the onset of symptoms. People are no longer infectious after the appearance of the rash, therefore, it is not necessary to isolate someone with Fifth Disease because it will not prevent the spread of infection.

Transmission can be reduced through good hand hygiene practices, respiratory etiquette including covering the nose and mouth when coughing, proper disposal of used facial tissue, and not sharing drinking/eating utensils. At least half of all adults have had exposure to Fifth Disease in childhood and will not develop it again.

High Risk Employees

Fifth Disease can lead to complicated health problems for susceptible pregnant employees and for people with chronic blood disorders or depressed immune systems. These employees should consult with the health care provider about the risks of Fifth Disease.

Susceptible employees who have medical conditions that increase their risk for complications should discuss the appropriate actions for work with their health care provider. Routine exclusion of these people is not recommended.

Pregnant employees and those planning pregnancy are advised to be tested to determine their immune status.

Fifth Disease Process

The following protocol has been developed to ensure that susceptible employees are provided guidance when Fifth Disease has been confirmed in an LKDSB school.

An employee who is immune will report to work.

When Fifth Disease has been confirmed in the school, a high risk employee is responsible for being tested to determine their immunity status at the earliest possible time. Employees who are pregnant and may have had direct exposure should consult with their health care provider. The employee may use sick leave entitlement or personal leave in order to visit their health care provider and obtain the required test to determine immunity status.

Employees who are absent from work for the following reasons are to be coded in LKARS as absent due to illness.

- With symptoms;
- Pregnant employees in the first half of pregnancy awaiting results of the blood test;
- Pregnant employees off work with a doctor's note, or
- Have a chronic blood disorder or depressed immune system and are susceptible to Fifth Disease.

Pregnant employees who are waiting results of the immunity testing and wish to be accommodated at an alternate work location must provide medical confirmation of pregnancy less than 20 weeks gestation as well as confirmation testing is in process. It is the responsibility of the employee to request accommodation.

Pregnant employees who are not immune to Fifth Disease and less than 20 weeks pregnant may be accommodated at an alternate location upon request. The employee will be required to provide negative immunity status from the doctor and confirmation of less than 20 weeks gestation.

An employee who is susceptible to Fifth Disease and in the first half of her pregnancy who does not wish to remain in a school for fear of potential exposure, although no presence of the disease has been confirmed, will be granted an unpaid leave of absence for the period requested. The employee will be required to provide negative immunity status from the doctor and confirmation of less than 20 weeks gestation.

Responsibilities

The Principal is responsible for:

- Ensuring that high risk staff within the building are aware of a medically confirmed case of Fifth Disease,
- Advising concerned staff to follow up with their health care provider,
- Ensuring confidentiality for anyone who has the illness or any susceptible staff with related concerns,
- Providing a letter and the Fifth Disease Fact Sheet to the parents/guardians of the students in the class where Fifth Disease has been confirmed,

- Contacting the LKARS Help Desk and advising them of the presence of Fifth Disease. Advising the LKARS Help Desk when there has been no new medically confirmed cases of Fifth Disease for twenty calendar days following the initial diagnosis.
- Providing the Fifth Disease Fact Sheet to other school staff as requested.
- Ensuring high risk employees are aware of this Administrative Procedure.
- Contacting the Human Resources Officer for assistance with accommodation requests.

The LKARS Help Desk is responsible for:

- Posting a site specific notice in LKARS when there has been a confirmed case of Fifth Disease in the school, and
- Removing the notice in LKARS when advised by the Principal that the school has been Fifth Disease free for twenty calendar days.

The Human Resource Officer is responsible for:

- Providing further information and guidance to administrators and employees regarding individual employee circumstances or accommodation.

Attachments: Fifth Disease Fact Sheet
 Letter to Parents/Guardians (classroom specific)

Implementation Date: November 24, 2014

Revised: August 23, 2022

Date

Dear Parents/Guardians of (insert Grade) Students,

I want to make you aware that a case of Fifth Disease has recently been confirmed in our (insert grade) classroom.

A fact sheet on Fifth Disease provided by Lambton and Chatham-Kent Public Health is printed on the reverse side of this letter for your information. Please review it carefully. If you suspect your child is also showing symptoms of Fifth Disease, we encourage you to report the symptoms to your family doctor. If you have any further questions regarding Fifth Disease, you can contact the health unit using the telephone number or email address listed on the fact sheet.

To slow the spread of communicable illnesses, we continue to encourage good hand hygiene practices, respiratory etiquette including covering the nose and mouth when coughing, proper disposal of used facial tissue, and not sharing drinking/eating utensils.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Principal

Fifth Disease

What is Fifth Disease?

- Mild, viral illness caused by parvovirus B19.
- Produces distinctive red rash on face. Also called "*slapped cheek*" disease.
- Rash spreads to torso of the body.
- More common in children than adults.
- There is no vaccine or treatment to prevent infection.
- Treat symptoms of illness.

What are symptoms?

- Begins with fever, tiredness, muscle aches and headache.
- 1-4 days after initial signs, a bright red rash appears on face.
- 2-3 days after facial rash, a red, lacy, net-like rash appears on arms, legs and torso. It can come and go for 2-3 weeks.
- Adults may have joint pain for up to three (3) weeks. About 20% of people have no symptoms.

When is it contagious?

- Before the rash develops.
- Children with fifth disease can return to school when feeling better, even if rash is present.
- Pregnant women can continue to work. Risk of spreading is small once rash appears. If not immune, speak to your employer about your options to limit your exposure.
- Adults who have had fifth disease will not have the infection again.
- An outbreak in the school suggests it is wide spread in the community.

How does it spread?

- Through secretions of the nose and mouth.
- Coughing or sneezing.
- Touching surfaces, eating utensils or tissues used by an infected person.

What are the risks?

- Fifth disease is usually mild for children and adults who are healthy. For some, it can cause serious health problems.
- People with specific blood disorders or immune system problems face greater risk of complications. Contact your healthcare provider.
- Women in their first 20 weeks of pregnancy, and who are not immune, should avoid those with fifth disease. The risk of fetal death is extremely low (approximately 6 in 10,000 pregnancies).
- If you are pregnant and have been exposed, talk with your healthcare provider. Blood tests will confirm immunity.

Prevention

- Stay home if you are ill with fever and cough.
- Wash your hands and carefully dispose of used tissues.
- Do not share eating utensils.
- Cough and sneeze in your sleeve or use a facial tissue



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