



One minute guide to...

Slapped Cheek Syndrome

What is it?

Slapped cheek syndrome is caused by a virus (parvovirus B19). Typically, the rash looks as if one or both of the cheeks have been slapped.

Slapped cheek syndrome is common in children and is usually a mild illness which gets better by itself in about 3 weeks. It is less common in adults but can be more serious.

The infectious period is usually 4-20 days before the rash appears. By the time the rash appears, the person is usually no longer infectious.

What should I look for?

The first indication may be feeling unwell for a few days. Symptoms may include:

- a high temperature
- a runny nose and sore throat
- a headache
- a red rash may appear on one or both cheeks. This may not be obvious depending on skin colour. Adults do not usually have a rash on their face
- a few days later, a spotty rash may appear on the chest, arms and legs. The rash can be raised and itchy. This may not be obvious, depending on skin colour
- Adults may have joint pain and stiffness. This may happen in children, but it is rare.

Cheek rashes usually fade within 2 weeks. The body rash sometimes lasts up to a month and may disappear and reappear for some time.

What to do?

The infectious period is 4-20 days before the rash appears. By the time a rash develops, the person is usually no longer infectious.

To reduce the risk of spreading the virus:

- wash hands often with hot water and soap
- use tissues to trap germs when coughing or sneezing
- bin used tissues as quickly as possible
- *after* the rash appears, there is no requirement to stay out of the setting

Do:

- rest and drink lots of fluids
- take paracetamol or ibuprofen for high temperature, headache or joint pains.
- use unperfumed moisturiser on itchy skin
- speak with a pharmacist as they can advise as to a suitable [antihistamine](#) for children

Speak to a GP:

- if you think you have slapped cheek syndrome (or have been in contact with someone who has), and you are pregnant
- if you have a blood disorder, such as sickle cell disease or thalassaemia
- you have a weakened immune system, for example, because of diabetes or chemotherapy
- ask for an urgent appointment if you have very pale skin, shortness of breath, extreme tiredness or faintness.

Further Information:

From NHS: [Slapped cheek syndrome - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

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Working for Cumberland Council and
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