Parvovirus Infection in Pregnancy
(Fifth Disease, Erythema Infectiosum)

Parvovirus is a rash caused by a virus that is most common in children. It develops 5 to 10 days after being infected with the virus and lasts less than 3 weeks. It spreads to the torso (*trunk*), hands and wrists causing pain in the joints. This is also known as fifth disease, a mild, spreadable (*contagious*) illness. Complications are rare. This illness is usually harmless.

CAUSES
Parvovirus infection spreads from person to person through droplets carried in the air (*respiratory secretions*) and hand-to-hand contact. The early stage (5 to 10 days before the rash) is usually marked by a low grade fever, mild upper respiratory symptoms, and headache. This is also the time when this infection is contagious and can be passed on to someone else. Once the rash appears, the infection is not contagious.

SYMPTOMS
- In adolescents and adults, it often causes stiffness and joint pain. This is usually in the hands, wrists and ankles.
- Following joint pain, a bright red rash on both cheeks occurs.
- After 1 to 3 days, a pink, lacy rash appears on the body, arms, and legs. This rash may come and go for up to 3 to 5 weeks. It often gets brighter following warm baths, exercise, and sun exposure.
- Tiredness.
- Upper respiratory symptoms, sore throat, cough, shortness of breath.
- You may have no other symptoms or only a slight runny nose, sore throat, and very low fever.
- 33% of people with the parvovirus have no symptoms.

PARVOVIRUS AND PREGNANCY
See your caregiver if you have been exposed to parvovirus. The parvovirus can be passed along to the fetus. Most pregnancies will result in a normal birth delivering a healthy baby, but there is still a risk to the fetus. Infection in the uterus occurs 25 to 50% of the time, but infection to the fetus is 5%.

DIAGNOSIS
About half of adults are not able to catch (*immune*) the parvovirus infection, most likely because of a previous, unnoticed childhood infection. Blood testing for antibodies will diagnose parvovirus infection.

TREATMENT
- No treatment is necessary. It is not necessary to stay away from other people.
- For symptom treatment, talk to your caregiver. You may be told to take over-the-counter medication for symptom relief.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS:
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- If you are pregnant are not immune to the parvovirus and work with small children, it may be a good idea to take a leave of absence until the baby is born.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:
- An oral temperature of 101º F (38.3º C) or above develops, and is not controlled by medication.
- You seem to be getting worse or developing other problems, such as shortness of breath, cough or sore

throat.

- The rash becomes itchy and bothersome, although the rash itself usually does not need treatment.
- You have joint pain in your hands and wrists.

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