

Tuesday 30 August 2011



SLAP CHEEK VIRUS

Dear Parents/Caregivers,

We have a growing number of children with "Slap Cheek" virus in our school. Slap Cheek is the common name for Parvovirus, although this is a different strain of Parvovirus than that passed on by cats and dogs.

Parvovirus or slap cheek can be harmful to an unborn baby, if the mother contracts it during pregnancy. Child centres, schools and kindies need to alert pregnant mums when there is a local outbreak of parvovirus.

What is Slap Cheek?

This viral illness gets its name from the characteristic 'slap like' rash that appears on children's faces. It is a relatively mild disease that begins with a rash on the face which spreads to the body and then fades. It often occurs in small outbreaks and will rapidly spread through schools and day care centres. The virus is spread by sneezing, coughing, kissing or close contact. ***Children are infectious for the 5 – 6 days before the rash appears.***

Incubation time (the period from first being exposed to the illness until symptoms developing) is around 5 – 20 days. Once the rash appears, the child is no longer infectious. Once your child has recovered from slap cheek they should have lifelong immunity to the illness.

What are the Signs and Symptoms?

- The rash can be preceded by a fever, sore throat and cold symptoms
- A red rash on the face that may appear on one or both cheeks- it actually looks like the cheek has been slapped
- The rash on the body is firstly red and blotchy and then becomes faded and lace-like
- The rash may be itchy
- The rash may fade and then flare up, exacerbated by sunlight, exercise, temperature changes like a bath and the child getting upset
- The child is normally well, apart from the rash, but may have stomach upsets, headache and fatigue.

Because the only symptom present when children are at the highly infectious stage, is that the children feel unwell, we will be sending home all students sent to the sickbay for this reason.

Slap cheek can also affect adults where it may present as joint pains (especially hands, wrists, ankles, knees) and swelling that may last from days to weeks. There will often be no rash in adults.

What is the treatment?

Contact your doctor if your child's temperature is very high, or you are in the first half of a pregnancy or you are not sure if the rash is slap cheek. There isn't any treatment as such - you just need to keep your child comfortable; see 'What can I do?' below. See your doctor if your child develops swollen, painful joints.

What can I do for my child at home if they contract this?

- Keep your child comfortable in cool cotton clothing
- Apply calomine lotion to the skin to relieve the itch
- Keep your child's nails short to help prevent scratching and secondary infection
- Ensure your children wash their hands regularly throughout the day
- It may help to use cotton gloves, mittens or socks on smaller children or at night to stop scratching
- Ensure they have plenty to drink
- If your child has a fever, or is in discomfort, give paracetamol syrup, checking the bottle for correct dose for age
- If your child has developed slap cheek let any friends, relatives or social contacts who are pregnant know so they can inform their doctor or midwife, who will do blood tests and monitor the pregnancy.

Kind Regards,

Kathryn Ramel
Associate Principal