

Slapped cheek syndrome - <https://www.nhs.uk/>

Slapped cheek syndrome (also called fifth disease) is common in children and should get better on its own within 3 weeks. It's rarer in adults, but can be more serious.

Check if it's slapped cheek syndrome

The first sign of slapped cheek syndrome is usually 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 1 or both cheeks. Adults do not usually get the rash on their face. The rash may be less obvious on brown and black skin.

A few days later, a spotty rash may appear on the chest, back, arms and legs. The rash can be raised. It may be harder to see on brown and black skin.

How long it lasts

The rash usually fades within 1 to 3 weeks, but it can sometimes last for longer, especially if you're hot or stressed.

Adults might also have joint pain and stiffness. This can happen in children too, but it's rare. Joint pain can continue for many weeks, even after the other symptoms have gone.

How to treat slapped cheek syndrome yourself

You do not usually need to see a GP for slapped cheek syndrome.

There are some things you can do to ease the symptoms.

Do

- rest
- drink plenty of fluids to avoid [dehydration](#) – babies should continue their normal feeds
- take [paracetamol](#) or [ibuprofen](#) if uncomfortable

Don't

- do not give aspirin to children under 16

Important

Tell your midwife or a GP if you're pregnant or have a weakened immune system or blood disorder and have been near someone with slapped cheek syndrome.

Non-urgent advice: See a GP if:

You think you have slapped cheek syndrome and:

- you're pregnant – there's a very small risk of [miscarriage](#) or other complications
- you have a blood disorder, such as [sickle cell disease](#) or [thalassaemia](#) – there's a risk of severe anaemia
- you have a weakened immune system – for example, because of chemotherapy, leukaemia, HIV or diabetes

Urgent advice: Ask for an urgent GP appointment or get help from NHS 111 if:

You think you have slapped cheek syndrome and you have:

- very pale skin
- shortness of breath
- extreme tiredness
- fainted

These can be signs of severe anaemia and you might be sent to hospital for a [blood transfusion](#). You can call 111 or [get help from 111 online](#).

How slapped cheek syndrome is spread

Slapped cheek syndrome is caused by a virus (parvovirus B19). The virus spreads by coughs and sneezes or by touching contaminated objects.

It's hard to avoid spreading slapped cheek syndrome because most people do not know they have it until they get the rash.

You can only spread it to other people before the rash appears.

To reduce the risk of spreading the virus:

- wash your hands often with water and soap
- use tissues to trap germs when you cough or sneeze
- bin used tissues as quickly as possible

Information:

You do not have to stay off work or school after the rash appears but do let the school or teacher know if your child has slapped cheek syndrome.