

Slapped cheek

Description

Slapped cheek is a viral illness that gets its name from the 'slap like' rash that appears on a child's face.

At first children may have symptoms of the common cold. This can be followed by the deep red rash on the face and a red lace-like rash on the body and limbs, which may be itchy.

Once a child has recovered from slap cheek they should have life-long immunity to the illness.

How does it spread?

Slapped cheek is spread by sneezing, coughing, kissing or close contact. Slapped cheek can spread rapidly through centres and is most common in winter and spring.

Once a child is infected with the virus, the time until the symptoms appear is usually between 4 – 20 days.

Infectious period

A child is infectious up to five or six days before the first symptoms appear. Once the rash appears the child is no longer infectious.

Exclusion period

Slapped cheek is contagious before it is diagnosed and the rash appears. Excluding children with the condition from a centre will not prevent the spread of the disease. Affected children may remain if they are well.

Responsibilities of staff

- Tell parents there is slapped cheek at the centre.
- Display information about slapped cheek on your notice board.
- Ensure children who are 'unwell' remain at home. Those children who are well and have a rash may continue to attend the centre.
- Make sure staff and children's hands are washed often with soap and warm water and are dried to help prevent the spread of the virus.
- Inform parents who are pregnant. Pregnant parents or staff should consult their GP or midwife.

Responsibilities of parents

- Take your child to a GP if they have anaemia or a weakened immune system.
- Pregnant women in the first half of their pregnancy can pass the infection on to their baby and should see their GP.

Treatment

- There is no specific treatment or vaccine for slapped cheek. A child may have a low grade fever before the rash appears.
- Encourage small amounts of water, rest and use paracetamol to relieve fever. The application of an ice-cold flannel can relieve the discomfort of burning hot cheeks.