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Office of the School Nurse

TO: PARENTS/GUARDIANS

FROM: Stacey Farreny, RN, BSN, CSN / Marylyn Campanella, RN, BSN, CSN - HEALTH OFFICE

RE: FIFTH'S DISEASE (HUMAN PARVOVIRUS B-19)

DATE: January 29th, 2018

This week a student who attends our school was diagnosed with Fifth's Disease. This is an illness, which is fairly common in childhood, and about 50% of adults have been previously infected. It is contagious, however, by the time the symptoms appear the child is past the contagious stage. I have included the most recent information on Fifth's Disease from the CDC website: ww.cdc.gov.

What is Fifth's Disease: It is a mild rash with a typical "slapped- cheek" rash on the face and lace like, red rash on the trunk and limbs. Before the rash breaks out the child may have had "cold" like symptoms, or a low-grade fever. Usually there are few complaints other than some itchiness and sometimes-mild fever or malaise. Adults often experience symptoms of arthralgia. The rash can last up to 10 days and is exacerbated by activity, sunlight and heat.

Cause: It is caused by the human parvovirus B19, a virus that infects only humans; it is not the pet parvovirus.

How is it spread? It is found in the respiratory secretions of infected persons before the rash appears. Person to person contact causes a 50% rate of infection in household contacts. During outbreaks at schools the infections rate is 10% to 60%. A susceptible person usually becomes ill 4 to 14 days after being infected by the virus.

How is it diagnosed, and what is the treatment? A physician can diagnose the disease by seeing the rash, however, a blood test can confirm the diagnosis, but this is not usually necessary. Your physician can advise you on treatment of the symptoms, such as mild fever, pain or itching. **Your physician should be contacted if you suspect Fifth's Disease to rule out similar diseases and to monitor for complications, including secondary strep.**

Who is at risk for serious complications? People who have sickle-cell disease, chronic anemias, and people who are immune-suppressed are at risk for serious complications. Pregnant women should discuss possible exposure to the disease with their physicians. Again, 50% of adults have already had the disease at some time.

Prevention: There is no available vaccine for Fifth's Disease. **The most effective disease prevention technique is frequent hand washing!** Since the symptoms appear **after** the communicable stage of the disease, exclusion from school and childcare facilities is not likely to prevent the spread of the disease. Also remind children to use tissues if they show symptoms of a cold and keep their hands away from their mouth, nose and eyes. Obviously, if your child has severe cold symptoms, cough or fever they should be kept home.