

CHILDREN  
WITH

# slapped cheek disease



## Children with **slapped cheek disease**

### **General information:**

Slapped cheek disease is also called “the fifth childhood disease” The condition is a virus infection which first and foremost affects children aged 5-15, but everybody can catch it.

The condition is characterised by a red rash on both cheeks, hence the name. Usually, the illness is quite mild; the rash will last from a few days up to a week, after which it disappears. In the following weeks, however, the rash may return several times as a result of stress, changes in temperature (hot/cold) and physical exertion.

Slapped cheek disease is an epidemic which occurs approx. every three years and lasts from late winter to early summer. About 2/3 of all Danes have had the disease as a child and therefore have antibodies which protect them against infection. In other words, if you have had the disease once you will not get it again.

### **How is it contracted?**

Common to all viruses is that they infect as a result of close contact. Virus is found in the child's mucus/ snot and spittle, and children are infected when they breathe in small droplets from coughing or sneezing and after being in contact with hands or toys, that are contaminated with spittle or snot.



### Symptoms:

- The rash first appears in the face as a blush and the skin on both cheeks becomes slightly swollen
- It then spreads to the outer sides of the arms and legs
- Itching
- Aching joints
- Fever is rare.

### Good advice:

- Cool surroundings and zinc liniment may relieve the itching. You can buy zinc liniment at the pharmacy and apply a thin layer to the skin
- You can relieve joint pains with painkillers as agreed with a doctor
- If the child runs a fever make sure it is offered something to drink often and is lightly dressed so that it can get rid of the heat.

### When to see a doctor?

Contact a doctor if the child:

- gets a rash which does not disappear when you press it
- makes you worry and you feel insecure.

Contact your general practitioner first because he/she knows your child better than the doctor on call. You can also get good advice and guidance from your health visitor.

### Treatment:

Most virus diseases cannot be treated. All you can do is to relieve the symptoms and observe the child.

### Prevention:

Prevention is difficult in practice because the disease is transmitted in places where many children are in close contact. In general, it is important for both adults and children to wash their hands often. This has been documented to reduce the risk of infection considerably.

If you are pregnant and do not know if you have been infected, you should consult your general practitioner.

### Childcare:

Inform the childcare centre that your child has slapped cheek disease.

The child can return to childcare when the temperature is normal and the child feels well enough to play with other children.

## Parental guidelines

These guidelines have been prepared by a working group set up by the departments of paediatrics in Herning, Randers, Skejby and Viborg.

The intention with these guidelines is to provide parents with advice across the following sectors: health visitors, general practitioners family doctors, doctors on call, and the staff at paediatric admission wards in the Central Denmark Region.

The parental guidelines can be seen and downloaded from the internet on the web site [www.fv.rm.dk](http://www.fv.rm.dk)

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