



PROCEDURE:	Pr A: 19A
EFFECTIVE:	April 1, 2008
AMENDED:	
RELATED POLICIES:	A: 19, H:06
REPEALS:	
REVIEW DATE:	2010-2011

## 1.0 Objective

The Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board shall adopt the following procedures to reduce the risk of exposure to Fifth Disease by pregnant staff members.

## 2.0 Preamble

Fifth Disease is a mild viral infection common among elementary school children. It is spread from person to person through contact with respiratory secretions of an infected person and has an incubation period of 4 – 14 days.

There is no vaccine or medicine that prevents Parvovirus B19 infection. Frequent hand washing is recommended as a practical and probably effective method to reduce the spread of Parvovirus. Excluding persons with Fifth Disease from work, child care centers, schools, or other settings is not likely to prevent the spread of Parvovirus B19, since ill persons are contagious before they develop the characteristic scarlet lace rash.

The disease is most often not diagnosed until a rash appears on the child’s face. The child is considered to be contagious up to the time that the facial rash develops, but by the time the rash appears on the child’s face and/or arms, the child is usually no longer contagious.

The affected child is not required to stay home from school. However, the disease can be harmful to pregnant women who do not have immunity to the disease.

Several outbreaks of Fifth Disease have been reported in our schools over the past few years. In these cases, the most pressing concern is how to deal with pregnant staff in the school.

## 3.0 Procedure

The following procedure has been developed to ensure that the Board is responding in a responsible fashion, to ensure that the employees are treated in a fair and consistent manner and to ensure that the privacy of individuals is respected:

- 3.1 Once the disease has been diagnosed, all staff members must be notified that the disease is present in the school/work location and inform the Human Resources Department.

- 3.2 Signage as provided, must be placed in the Visitor Sign-In Book and the Occasional Staff Sign-In Book.
- 3.3 Pregnant employees who are not immune to Fifth Disease should not have direct contact with students who have Fifth Disease.
- 3.4 Pregnant employees are encouraged to obtain the blood test that will confirm whether or not they have the antibodies against Fifth Disease. They should consult with their own doctor regarding the test. Employees who are immune from the disease are considered not to be at risk and are not the subject of this protocol. All employees are encouraged to contact their physicians during their pregnancy regarding their immunity status.
- 3.5 Staff members who leave the workplace to go to the doctor and get a blood test will be given one-day leave without charging their sick day account.
- 3.6 When an outbreak of Fifth Disease is confirmed, and a pregnant employee has not yet been tested for the antibodies, the employee shall be given the option to access sick leave benefits (provided she has enough sick days available) **or** apply to be re-assigned within the system while awaiting the results of her test\*.
- 3.7 Where the employee has chosen to be re-assigned, the employee shall be so re-assigned whenever possible while awaiting test results to determine her immunity to Fifth Disease\*. If re-assignment is not possible, employees should remain at home during this time, without sick day credit deduction to a maximum of ten (10) days. If an employee remains off work after test results confirm that immunity has been established, sick day credits will be deducted and medical documentation will be required.
- 3.8 If the employee is immune to Fifth Disease, she can return to her regular assignment. If she is not immune, she could continue with the alternate assignment for 7 – 10 days, or as recommended by her physician.
- 3.9 It is not recommended that pregnant women should routinely be excluded from a workplace where a Fifth Disease outbreak is occurring. Rather, the decision to stay away from a workplace where there are cases is a personal decision for a woman to make after discussions with her physician and Human Resources.
- 3.10 **WSIB Implications** – Employees who are absent from the workplace to prevent exposure to Fifth Disease are **not** eligible for coverage by WSIB. However, if an employee contracts the disease and is able to provide proof of exposure in the workplace, there may be entitlement to WSIB benefits. Parvovirus B19 is a mild disease and does not usually necessitate absence from work.

\*For Teaching Staff, please note:

In the event that a teacher is not immune to Fifth Disease and is re-assigned, the Board reserves the right to assign the Teacher to casual occasional teacher assignments. This shall

not be done unless the Teacher cannot be assigned to work within the elementary bargaining unit.

The vacancy created by any such re-assignment or absence of the regular teacher shall be filled by an occasional teacher in accordance with the terms of the occasional teacher collective agreement.

#### **4.0 References**

##### 4.1 For further information on Fifth Disease:

Parvovirus B-19 Infection during Pregnancy  
Atlanta Maternal Fetal Medicine  
Clinical Discussions Vol 3, No. 5  
[www.atlanta-mfm.com](http://www.atlanta-mfm.com)

Centre for Disease Control & Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

Windsor-Essex County Health Unit  
Windsor Office – 258-2146  
Leamington Office – 326-5716  
[www.wechealthunit.org](http://www.wechealthunit.org)