



Rubella

What is rubella?

Rubella, also known as German measles, is a viral infection. Rubella mainly affects children; however it can be more severe in adults, especially pregnant women as it can cause serious consequences to the developing baby.

If you have rubella, it is important that you stay home and away from people until the eighth day after the rash starts. Rubella is most infectious seven days before the rash starts to seven days after the rash.

How is it spread?

Rubella can be spread through contact with secretions from the nose and mouth of an infected person. You can spread rubella even if you do not have symptoms.

If you think you or your child has rubella, you need to let your health care provider know before arriving to the appointment so special care can be taken to prevent spreading rubella to other people.

What symptoms should I watch for?

Rubella is usually a mild illness. Symptoms may include a rash, slight fever, joint aches, headache, runny nose, red eyes, and swollen glands in the neck. Some rubella infections do not have a rash.

If the rash does appear, it may be itchy and usually starts on the face then spreads from head to toe. The rash may last three days. The symptoms of rubella can start about 14-21 days after being in close contact with someone with the disease.

How do I know if I have rubella?

Your health care provider may ask you to have a blood test, or a swab taken from your throat or an area at the back of your nose.

What is the treatment for rubella?

There is no medicine to treat rubella, but you can take medicine to help with the fever and aches.

How do I protect myself and others?

Vaccination is the best way to prevent rubella. Rubella vaccine in combination with mumps and measles (MMR) is routinely given soon after a child's first birthday. A second dose is given as part of a combination vaccine for measles, mumps, rubella and varicella (MMRV) at 4-6 years of age. Speak to your health care provider about the vaccine. If you do not have a health care provider, call the Vaccine Preventable Disease Team at the health unit.

People who are not fully immunized with 2 doses of MMR vaccine may be excluded from school if there is a confirmed case of rubella in their school.

You can also help prevent the spread of rubella by washing your hands after coughing, sneezing, and before preparing foods. If you do cough or sneeze, cover your nose and mouth. Do not share cigarettes or drink from the same glass, water bottle or straw as others.

What if I am pregnant or thinking of becoming pregnant?

If you are thinking of becoming pregnant check your immune status as the MMR vaccine is a live vaccine and cannot be given to you during pregnancy.

What is Congenital Rubella Syndrome?

If a pregnant woman is infected during the first trimester of pregnancy, this may cause some babies to be born with defects of the heart, eyes, ears and brain. Fetal death or spontaneous miscarriage can also occur. Fetal defects are rare when infection occurs after the 20th week of pregnancy. A baby born to a mother who was infected with rubella during pregnancy will have rubella congenital syndrome.

If you think you are pregnant and have concerns about rubella speak with your health care provider immediately.

For more information call the Communicable Disease Team: ext. 8809