

Rubella (German Measles) Fact Sheet

Rubella, or German Measles, is caused by a virus.

This virus is found in the nose or throat of an infected person. Rubella is generally a mild disease, but can be very serious in pregnant women because it can harm the unborn baby. The number of people that get rubella in the United States has decreased significantly, with fewer than 25 cases reported yearly. Anyone can get rubella except those who have had rubella or the rubella vaccine.

Rubella is spread from person-to-person through by airborne droplets and direct contact with infected respiratory secretions.

Rubella is spread to others by contact with the nose or throat secretions of an infected person. Droplets from these secretions are deposited into the air whenever an infected person coughs or sneezes. A person with rubella may be contagious for 7 days before to 7 days after the rash develops. Babies who are born with rubella may spread the virus for up to 1 year after birth.

Symptoms to look for include:

- Low fever
- Rash (lasts approximately 3 days or less)
- Joint aches
- Swollen glands, especially behind the ears and the back of the neck

Symptoms occur within 14 to 21 days (usually 14 to 17 days) after someone has been exposed to an infected person. Rubella can be a mild illness and have no symptoms.

See a doctor immediately for testing.

People who think they may have rubella, especially pregnant women, should see a doctor or their local health department **immediately** for testing. Diagnosis generally depends on a blood test. Urine, spinal fluid, and a throat swab can also be used to diagnosis rubella.

There is no specific treatment for rubella.

Most children and adults fully recover from rubella with few complications. However, rubella infection in a pregnant woman during the first 3 months of pregnancy can result in miscarriage, fetal death, or a baby with deafness, eye, heart, liver or skin problems, or mental retardation. Babies born with these conditions have Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS).

A pregnant woman should check with her doctor if she has been in contact with a case.

Pregnant women do not necessarily need to be excluded from settings where rubella is occurring since the risk to the pregnant woman will depend on whether the woman is already immune to rubella (due to vaccination or having the disease). Each exposure needs to be individually evaluated.

Rubella can be prevented with a rubella vaccine.

Every child should get rubella vaccine at 12 months of age and a 2nd dose at 4 to 6 years of age. Rubella vaccine is given in the same shot with measles and mumps vaccines, and is called measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine. Age-appropriate vaccination against rubella is required for enrollment in Maryland childcare institutions and schools. Women of childbearing age who haven't had rubella or rubella vaccine should get vaccinated with rubella vaccine before they become pregnant. Women should not get vaccinated if they are pregnant or plan to become pregnant within 4 weeks of receiving the MMR. For additional information about rubella vaccine, please visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/rubella/default.htm>.