

RUBELLA (GERMAN MEASLES)



WHAT IS RUBELLA?

Rubella (German measles) is an infection caused by a virus. Due to a very good vaccine (MMR) that prevents most cases, rubella is no longer very common. Children are given this vaccine when they are 1 year old and a second dose at 18 months.

Rubella may cause a mild illness with a low fever, swelling of the glands in the neck and behind the ears, and a rash with small red spots.

Rubella spreads from person to person through the air or by touch. People with rubella can spread the disease from 1 week before the rash appears to 1 week after.

Children usually get a mild form of the infection, so mild that they do not show any signs of illness. The infection may also be very mild in adults, although it can create serious problems for pregnant women. If a woman gets rubella in the first 3 months of pregnancy there is a very high chance of the unborn child dying or developing serious defects.

A physician can diagnose rubella by doing a blood test. If the infection is found, there is no medication to cure it. Antibiotics are ineffective because rubella is an infection caused by a virus.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

- Check immunization records to see if your child has had the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine series.
- If your child has not been vaccinated and is 1 year of age or older, contact your physician or the local public health agency to arrange for a vaccination as soon as possible.
- Contact your physician if you are a woman of childbearing age and do not know if you have had a rubella vaccine. The physician can tell if you are immune (vaccinated or have had the disease) by doing a blood test. If you are not immune and not pregnant, the physician will vaccinate you. The rubella vaccine or the MMR vaccine should not be given to pregnant women.
- If your child has rubella, he or she should not return to the childcare facility until at least 7 days after the rash first appeared. Pregnant women should not have contact with your child during that period.
- **Rubella can be prevented by immunization.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the Health Unit at 1-800-660-5853 or visit www.healthunit.org

Source: Canadian Paediatric Society
Control of Communicable Diseases Manual – 18th edition