

# Rubella Fact Sheet

**Rubella (German measles) is caused by a virus**

**Rubella virus is spread by contact with infected secretions from the nose or throat**

The virus is usually present in nose or mouth secretions from about 7 days before until at least 4 days after the rash begins. Rubella virus is passed on to another person by direct contact with infected secretions. Babies who are born with rubella may spread the virus for months after birth. Anyone can get rubella except those who have had rubella or rubella vaccine.

**Symptoms to look for include:**

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

Symptoms occur from 14 to 21 days after exposure (but usually 14 to 17 days). Up to half of all people who get rubella don't have any recognized rash.

**Unborn babies are at high risk of rubella complications**

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.

**Rubella can be prevented with rubella vaccine**

Every child should get rubella vaccine at 12 months of age and a second 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. 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 3 months after getting MMR.

**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. If the woman hasn't already been tested, the doctor will want to check her blood to determine whether she could catch rubella. Her doctor or the local health department can then counsel her about the risk to her unborn baby and steps she should take.