

RUBELLA (GERMAN MEASLES)

What is rubella?

Rubella, also known as German Measles, is an infection caused by the rubella virus.

Rubella is usually a mild illness in children but can be more serious if it occurs in a pregnant woman infected during the first 20 weeks of pregnancy.

How is it spread?

Rubella virus is spread through close contact with the nose and throat secretion of an infected person especially during coughs and sneezes.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may begin with low-grade fever, aches and pains, redness of eyes, enlarged lymph glands behind ears and at back of head. A rash (small red spots) appears first on the face and scalp and spread rapidly down the body and fades within one to three days. Adults and adolescents are more likely to develop joint pain.

When do symptoms start?

Symptoms appear in the second week after exposure to the rubella virus.

How long are people infectious?

The virus is present in the throat of the infected person from about seven days before and at least four days after the onset of rash.

How can rubella be prevented?

Rubella is a vaccine-preventable disease. Routine immunization of children has reduced the occurrence rate of rubella. All children should be vaccinated against rubella in an effort to eliminate the rubella virus. All children receive rubella containing vaccine at 12 and 18 months of age. All pregnant women should be tested for immunity to rubella. Those who are susceptible should be vaccinated as soon as possible after the birth of their child. Adults should contact their public health nurse regarding eligibility to receive rubella containing vaccine.

Families should practice the following good health habits:

- Clean hands well and often and teach children to clean their hands too.
- Do not share eating or drinking utensils.
- Clean surfaces that are frequently touched, including toys, door knobs, tables, and counters regularly with soap and water or cleaning wipes.
- Minimize close contact with other people when they are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, put your used tissue in the trash can and clean your hands. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow.

What is the treatment?

There is no treatment for rubella. Symptoms such as headache, aches and pain and joint pain can be relieved with acetaminophen.