

# Rubella

## What is rubella?

Rubella, also called German measles, is a rash illness caused by a virus.

## What are the symptoms of rubella?

Symptoms of rubella include:

- Rash
- Low-grade fever
- Cough
- Swollen glands behind the ears and in the neck

The rash generally appears first on the face and moves from head to foot, lasting about 3 days. Rubella symptoms can include joint pain, especially among adult females. Up to half of all persons infected with rubella do not have symptoms.

## Who gets rubella?

Anyone who has not been vaccinated or has not had rubella can get the disease. Because there are people throughout the world and in the United States that are not vaccinated, it is possible that infected travelers can carry rubella to non-vaccinated people.

## What health problems does rubella cause?

Most healthy children and adult males recover from rubella without any problems. Some adults with rubella, especially women, get sore or swollen joints.

If a pregnant woman who is not immune to rubella is infected before the 21st week of pregnancy, the baby may develop congenital rubella syndrome (CRS), which can cause serious health problems, including stillbirth, miscarriage, premature delivery, deafness, mental retardation, bone changes, and liver and spleen damage. Some of these problems are noticed at birth or within the first 2 years of life. Others, such as diabetes, may occur later in childhood. CRS is now rare in the United States due to common use of rubella vaccine.

## How is rubella diagnosed?

Because rubella looks like many other rash illnesses, it can only be diagnosed with laboratory testing. Health care providers may collect throat, urine, or blood samples to test for the virus.

## Is there a vaccine for rubella?

Yes. Rubella vaccine is contained in the MMR vaccine (Measles, Mumps, Rubella).

## How is rubella spread?

Rubella can be spread when a person with rubella coughs or sneezes near you, or if you touch fluids from the mouth or nose of a person with rubella and then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.

The period between exposure to the virus and the start of illness is usually 14 days, but can range from 12 to 23 days. A person with rubella can spread it to others from 7 days before until 7 days after the rash appears.

## What can be done to prevent rubella?

Vaccination is the best way to prevent rubella. Widespread vaccination against rubella is critical to controlling the spread of the disease and preventing birth defects caused by CRS.

## Is there a treatment for rubella?

There is no treatment for rubella. Your health care provider may be able to help treat some of the symptoms.

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