

Rubella

FACT SHEET

What is Rubella?

Rubella is also known as German measles. Rubella is caused by a virus that is spread by contact with discharges from the nose or throat of someone who has the disease.

Who Can Get Rubella?

Anyone can get rubella, except those people who have had it before or those people who have had a rubella immunization.

What are the Symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- Low fever
- A mild rash that lasts one to three days
- Aches in the joints
- Swollen glands, behind the ears and the back of the neck

These symptoms start about 2-3 weeks after contact with someone with the disease. Half of the people who get rubella don't get any symptoms at all.

What is the Treatment?

There is no treatment for rubella. Most children and adults can recover from rubella without any problems. However, if a pregnant woman gets the rubella infection, her baby can be born with deafness, eye and heart problems and/or mental retardation. Every woman should get a blood test before she becomes pregnant to see if she has protection against rubella infection. If a pregnant woman has been in contact with someone with rubella, she should contact her family doctor for a blood test and to discuss the dangers to her baby.

How Can You Prevent Rubella?

Rubella can be prevented by immunization. Children should have a rubella immunization at 12 months of age and again when they reach school age. This vaccine is given at the same time as the measles and mumps vaccine. Adults can get rubella vaccine if they do not have protection against the disease. Women should not get the vaccine if they are already pregnant or if they plan to get pregnant within one month of the immunization.

To prevent rubella infection:

- Immunize all children against rubella
- If pregnant or planning to get pregnant, get blood tests to check for rubella protection
- Avoid close contact with anyone who has rubella infection
- Anyone with rubella should stay home until non-infectious