

Rubella Information Sheet

What is rubella?

Rubella, sometimes called German Measles or Three-Day Measles, is a contagious disease caused by a virus. The infection is usually mild, but can cause serious birth defects if a woman is infected while she is pregnant. Rubella is a vaccine preventable disease.

How can you catch rubella?

Rubella is spread by contact with the saliva or mucus of an infected person or through the air by coughing and sneezing. Rubella can also spread from a pregnant mother to her fetus.

What are the symptoms of rubella?

Half of people infected with rubella do not have symptoms. Symptoms usually appear 12-23 days after a person is infected, often last 2-3 days, and can include:

- Rash that starts on the face and spreads to the rest of the body
- Low fever (less than 101°F)
- Cold-like symptoms
- Swollen glands (older children and adults)
- Aching joints (often in young women)

Infections with rubella early in pregnancy can cause birth defects up to 85% of the time.

How can you be treated for rubella?

There is no specific treatment for rubella. Your doctor may recommend medicine to reduce fever, bed rest, and extra fluids. Most rubella infections are mild and require minimal treatment. However, rubella complications and birth defects in babies who were infected in the womb may require life-long care.

How can you prevent rubella?

Rubella can be prevented with the MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine. Two doses of vaccine are nearly 100% effective in preventing rubella illness.

Before any international travel:

- Infants 6-11 months old should receive one dose of the MMR vaccine
- Children 12 months of age and older should receive two doses of the MMR vaccine at least 28 days apart
- Adolescents and adults who have not had the MMR vaccine should get two doses at least 28 days apart