



## Are you immune to rubella?

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If you are not immune, protect yourself by getting the MMR vaccine.

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Rubella, also known as German measles, is a serious infection caused by a virus. In adults, this infection can cause fever, sore throat and swollen glands in the neck. Rubella can also cause aches and pains, and swelling of the joints. It can be followed by chronic arthritis. This infection is spread by contact with an infected person through coughing, sneezing or talking to them.

Rubella can be very dangerous for a pregnant woman. If a woman gets rubella in the early part of a pregnancy, it is likely that she will have a miscarriage, a stillborn baby or a baby with severe handicaps, such as blindness, deafness, mental retardation and heart defects. This is called congenital rubella syndrome.

**It is very important to make sure that you are immune to rubella.** A blood test that is done along with your routine prenatal blood tests can tell if you are immune or not immune (susceptible). Immune means you cannot get this infection. If you are susceptible, it is possible you could get this infection.

If you are susceptible, you need to get a vaccine to make you become immune. A vaccine just for rubella is not available. The vaccine you will get is a needle (injection) that contains a combination of measles, mumps and rubella vaccines, called MMR. **One injection can protect you from all three infections.** Information about measles and mumps is on page 4.

This vaccine is not safe to give during pregnancy. **You should have this vaccine as soon as you are no longer pregnant.** Getting the vaccine will make sure that you are immune and you cannot get rubella during a future pregnancy.

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## **Is the MMR vaccine safe?**

Yes, most people have no side effects. The vaccine may cause a rash or fever 7 to 12 days after the needle is given. This may last for 1 to 2 days. The mumps part of the vaccine may also cause swelling of the glands in the neck. Very rarely, meningitis may occur.

It is safe to receive this vaccine if you:

- are breastfeeding
- have had a measles or mumps vaccine in the past

**Avoid becoming pregnant for 4 weeks  
after receiving rubella vaccine.**

**If you are pregnant when you receive  
the vaccine, there is a slight risk that the  
vaccine may cause birth defects.**

If you would like help to choose a method of birth control, talk with your nurse, family doctor or midwife.

## **Who should not have the vaccine?**

There are some people who should not have this vaccine.

Check with your doctor if you:

- are allergic to eggs (after eating eggs you get hives, wheezing, trouble breathing or swelling of your face)
  - are allergic to an antibiotic medication called Neomycin
  - have a disease which lowers the body's ability to fight infection, such as lupus
  - are taking medication which lowers the body's ability to fight infection, such as prednisone or other steroids
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**Get medical help if you have any of these problems after receiving the vaccine:**

- difficulty breathing or swallowing
- swelling of the face
- convulsions
- vomiting

**If you have any questions about the vaccine, please talk to your doctor, midwife, nurse or pharmacist.**

**Information for women who receive Rh Immune Globulin and Measles, Mumps, Rubella vaccine**

If you are susceptible to rubella, you will need to get the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine.

If you have Rh negative blood and your baby has Rh positive blood you will be given Rh Immune Globulin.

- Rh Immune Globulin prevents your body from making antibodies against Rh positive blood cells. This will prevent problems with future pregnancies.

When Rh Immune Globulin and MMR are given close together, there is a chance that the MMR vaccine will not be as effective.

**In 2 months' time, visit your family doctor for a blood test to tell if the vaccine has worked and you are immune (not susceptible) to rubella.**

**If you are not immune, your doctor will give you another MMR vaccine.**

Avoid becoming pregnant for 4 weeks after receiving the rubella vaccine. If you become pregnant, there is a slight risk that the vaccine may cause birth defects. If you would like help to choose a method of birth control, talk with your nurse, family doctor or midwife.

## **Information about measles and mumps**

The vaccine you get to make you become immune to rubella also protects you against measles and mumps infections.

### **Measles**

Measles is an infection that is easily spread from person to person through coughing, sneezing or talking.

Measles can cause a high fever, cough, rash, runny nose and watery eyes. Measles can cause serious problems such as ear infections or lung infections (pneumonia).

Measles can be complicated by encephalitis, an infection of the brain. Encephalitis often causes brain damage or mental retardation. Measles can cause death, although this happens very rarely.

### **Mumps**

Mumps is an infection of the glands that make saliva. Mumps is spread by contact with an infected person through coughing, sneezing or talking to them.

Mumps can cause fever, headaches and a swollen face. Mumps can cause serious problems such as meningitis, an infection of the fluid and the lining covering of the brain and spinal cord. About 1 in every 10 people with mumps gets meningitis. Fortunately meningitis caused by mumps is usually mild. Mumps can also cause a painful infection of the ovaries in women. If a woman gets mumps in the first 3 months of a pregnancy, she may have a miscarriage.