

Rubella

(German Measles)

What is it?

- Rubella is an infection caused by a virus.
- It occurs worldwide and is most common in winter or spring.
- Rubella is important because it can cause birth defects or death in the unborn child. This disease is called Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS).
- Symptoms of rubella begin 12 to 23 days (average 14 to 18 days) after having contact with a person who has rubella.
- Symptoms include:
 - fever
 - cough and runny nose
 - red and irritated eyes
 - rash that starts on the head and face and then spreads to the rest of the body
 - swollen glands in neck and behind ears
- Persons with rubella are contagious for 1 week before and at least 7 days after the rash is seen.
- Infants born with CRS may spread the virus for several months after birth.

How is it spread?

- The virus is airborne. It is spread by breathing in the air that contains the virus particles.
- It can also spread by direct contact with secretions from the nose and throat of infected persons.
- Infants born with CRS can also spread the virus to other people through throat secretions and urine.

Is there treatment for it?

- A blood product called Immune Globulin (IG) given after exposure early in pregnancy may not prevent infection but it may decrease the severity of the symptoms.

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What can be done to prevent the spread of it?

- Get the vaccine. Rubella can be prevented by following the routine vaccination schedule.
- Check your child's vaccination records to see if he or she has had the rubella vaccine or MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) after 1 year of age and a booster at 4 to 6 years.
- Contact your doctor or the local public health unit to get the vaccine, if your child has not been vaccinated and is 1 year of age or older.
- Contact your doctor if you are a woman of childbearing age and do not know if you have been vaccinated for rubella. Your doctor can tell if you have had the vaccine or have had rubella by doing a blood test. If you have not had the vaccine or the illness and are not pregnant, your doctor will vaccinate you. **Pregnant women should not get the vaccine for rubella or MMR – wait to do this until after the baby is born.**
- Keep your child home from day care or school until at least 7 days after the rash first appeared. Pregnant women should not have contact with their child during this time.

For more information

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/publications/immune/mmr.aspx>

Centre for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/rubella/>

**Stop the spread of germs and infection.
Clean your hands.**

