

Rubella/ Rubella Congenital Syndrome Fact Sheet

What is Rubella?

Rubella, also called German measles, usually causes only mild illness in children; however, it can have serious consequences for pregnant women, as miscarriages are common among women who get rubella while pregnant. The disease usually occurs in the winter and spring.

How does it spread?

Rubella is very contagious and is spread through droplets from the nose or mouth of an infected person when coughing, sneezing or talking. Those with rubella are considered infectious from seven days before the onset of rash, to seven days after the rash has appeared.

What are the symptoms?

- Low-grade fever which usually lasts about two days.
- A rash, which usually begins on the face, progresses from head to foot, and lasts about three days. The rash, which is usually fainter than a red measles rash and is often itchy, may be hard to identify as a rubella rash. A rubella rash can be confused with many other illnesses.
- Swollen lymph nodes, which may begin swelling one week before the rash and remain swollen for several weeks.
- Joint pain and temporary arthritis, which are uncommon in children, but occur frequently in adults, especially in women.

What is Congenital Rubella Syndrome?

The greatest danger from rubella is to an unborn child. If a woman gets rubella in the early months of her pregnancy (first 11 weeks), her chance of giving birth to a baby with Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS) may be as high as 85%. An infant with CRS may be born deaf or blind, have a damaged heart, or intellectual disabilities.

How do I protect myself from Rubella?

- Get vaccinated. The measles/mumps/rubella vaccine is part of the routine immunization series available to all children in Ontario.
- Make sure you are immune to rubella before you become pregnant, and get vaccinated if you are not. This prevents you from getting rubella while pregnant, and protects the fetus.

Other Questions?

Talk to your health care provider or call our Communicable Disease Program at 613-966-5500 x349. Toll Free 1-800-267-2803 | TTY Dial 711 (1-800-267-6511) | www.hpepublichealth.ca

Reference

- Ministry of Health & Long Term Care, Immunization: Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) Vaccine, May 2005

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