

HEALTH SERVICES

Rubella Information

What is rubella?

Rubella is a viral infection that is most serious in pregnant females because it can harm their unborn baby. It is also called German measles or 3-day measles.

Who can get rubella?

Rubella can affect anyone who has not had the disease or who has not been immunized against it.

How is rubella spread?

Rubella is spread through the air by coughing, sneezing or talking.

What are the signs and symptoms of rubella?

In children the disease usually begins with a rash. The rash appears on the face and neck. The rash lasts about 2 or 3 days. In older children and adults there may be a low-grade fever, swollen glands in the back of the neck and an upper respiratory infection (URI) before the rash begins.

How soon do symptoms appear after exposure?

Usually 12-23 days after the person is exposed to the rubella virus.

How can a doctor confirm that an illness is rubella?

Confirmation is through a blood test.

When and for how long is a person able to spread rubella?

Rubella can be spread from about a week before the rash starts until about a week after. Infants with CRS can spread virus for months after birth.

What are the complications associated with rubella?

For most children and adults rubella is relatively mild. However, if a woman is in her 1st trimester of pregnancy catches the disease her baby has up to a 90% chance of being born deaf, blind, mentally retarded, with heart defects or stillborn. These conditions are referred to as Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS).

Is there a treatment for rubella?

There is no specific treatment for rubella.

Can rubella be prevented?

Yes. Rubella vaccine given in combination with Measles and Mumps (called MMR vaccine) is recommended for all children at 12-15 months of age and at 4-6 years of age. The two doses of vaccine normally provide life long immunity.

Does a past infection with rubella make a person immune for life?

Yes