



Rubella (German Measles)

Consult the health department before posting or distributing the Parent/Guardian fact sheet.

Rubella (German measles) is a mild rash illness that may be prevented through vaccination. However, if a pregnant person develops rubella, the baby can become infected and develop serious problems known as congenital rubella syndrome (CRS), or fetal death. **If a pregnant person is exposed to rubella, they should call their health care provider immediately; particularly if they do not know whether they are immune** (see Rubella and Pregnancy fact sheet).

School health and childcare provider information

Cause

Rubella virus.

Symptoms

Low-grade fever, swollen glands in the area behind the ears and in the neck, and rash. Rash usually appears first on the face and moves from head to foot. The rash usually lasts 3 days. Adults, especially women, may have sore or swollen joints. This joint pain usually lasts for less than one month. Up to half of all persons have no symptoms. Rarely, encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) may occur.

Spread

Rubella is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes tiny droplets with rubella virus into the air and another person breathes them in. Also can be spread by touching the secretions from the nose or mouth of an infected person and then touching one's eyes, nose, or mouth.

Incubation

It takes 12 to 23 days, usually 17 days, from the time a person is exposed until the symptoms begin.

Contagious period

From 7 days before to 7 days after the rash begins; children are most contagious from 3 to 4 days before rash starts until 7 days after rash starts. Infants with congenital rubella continue to shed virus in nasopharyngeal secretions and urine for 1 year or more, with transmission to susceptible contacts being possible.

Exclusion

Childcare and School: Until 7 days after the rash appears.

Rubella

Exclude unvaccinated children and staff for 21 days after the onset of rash in the last case of rubella.

Recommendations for exclusion should be done in collaboration with public health staff.

Diagnosis

Swabs from the throat or nose should be collected as soon as possible after rash onset and a blood test should be done 3 to 5 days after the symptoms begin.

Treatment

Recommend parents/guardians call their health care provider. There is no specific treatment for rubella.

Prevention

- Minnesota state law requires that all children 15 months of age or older in childcare settings or schools be vaccinated against rubella or have a legal exemption. This vaccination is usually combined with measles and mumps (MMR) and given at 12-15 months of age and 4-6 years of age. Two doses or a legal exemption are required for kindergarten and seventh grade school enrollment.
- Unvaccinated people who have been exposed to rubella should call their health care provider or local public health clinic as soon as possible to be vaccinated.
- Encourage parents/guardians to notify the childcare provider or school when their child is vaccinated so their records can be updated.
- Recommend staff stay home if they develop symptoms of rubella. Encourage parents/guardians keep their child home if they develop a rash, fever, and swollen glands behind the ears or neck.
- Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, or cough/sneeze into your sleeve. Dispose of used tissues in the trash.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after contact with secretions from the nose or mouth or handling used tissues. **Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.** If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Clean and sanitize mouth toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled (see Section 2).

For more information, call Hennepin County HSPHD-Epidemiology at (612) 543-5230 or call your local health department.

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