

RUBELLA

What is rubella?

Rubella, also called German Measles, is a disease caused by a virus. The biggest concern for this illness is the risk to an unborn child if a pregnant woman becomes infected with Rubella.

What are symptoms of rubella?

About 25-50% of infections show no symptoms at all. In children, symptoms are usually very mild, and include a slight fever, rash, and swollen glands. Adults tend to experience longer illness, lasting 1-5 days, with slight fever, headache, fatigue, runny nose, and watery eyes. Swollen glands usually appear 5-10 days before the rash. The rash, which is not always present, begins on the face and spreads to the rest of the body within 24 hours and usually lasts about 3 days. Joint pain and arthritis may occur with some infections, mostly in adults.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear between 14-18 days after exposure, with a range of 12-23 days.

How is rubella spread?

It is spread by direct (i.e. kissing, sharing eating utensils) or droplet (i.e. sneezing, coughing) contact with nose or throat secretions of infected persons.

How long is a person infectious (contagious)?

Ill people are contagious with rubella from 1 week before the rash appears, to 7 days after the rash appears.

How is rubella diagnosed and treated?

Rubella is diagnosed by blood tests. After the initial blood specimen is collected, an additional specimen may need to be collected 2-3 weeks later to confirm the diagnosis. There is no specific treatment for rubella because it is a virus.

Can rubella cause serious problems?

If a pregnant woman develops rubella, it can have serious consequences to the unborn baby. Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS) occurs in up to 85% of infants born to women who had rubella during the first trimester of pregnancy. Other risks include fetal death, spontaneous abortion, and congenital malformations. Most pregnant women are screened for immunity by their physician.

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How can I prevent a rubella infection?

Rubella is a vaccine-preventable disease. The vaccine is available individually or as part of the Measles-Mumps-Rubella vaccine (MMR). Washington State immunization law requires that all children have a record of 1 immunization against rubella. Women of childbearing age should have their rubella immunity determined and receive rubella vaccine if needed.

Rubella is a Washington State Reportable disease and must be reported to your local health department. In Snohomish County, you may contact Communicable Disease Surveillance and Response at 425.339.5278, Monday-Friday, 8:00 AM-5:00 PM.

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