

## Rubella (German Measles)

Rubella, also known as German measles, is an illness caused by a virus. Rubella is usually a mild illness that is now rare because of immunizations. Some people have it and do not even know it.

Tiny fluid drops pass rubella from person to person from the nose and mouth. It takes 2 or 3 weeks to get rubella after being exposed to it. A person with rubella can spread it the week before they get the rash and the week after.

Adults with rubella generally feel sicker than children with rubella. It is the worst for women in the first 20 weeks of pregnancy. The virus can cause them to lose the baby or cause serious harm to the baby.

### Signs and Symptoms

- Low fever
- Headache
- Runny nose
- Red eyes
- Muscle or joint pain
- Rash – either pink or light red spots that can combine to form patches. This can itch and last up to 3 days. Sometimes when the rash goes away, the skin sheds in fine flakes.

Some people with rubella have few or no signs and symptoms at all.

### Treatment of Rubella

There is no treatment for rubella. The rash lasts for only about three days and many people do not even seek medical treatment. Complications occur more in women who can develop arthritis for up to a month after getting the rash.

### Preventing Rubella

The MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine is the only way to prevent rubella. Children should have the first dose right after their first birthday (12 to 15 months old) and a second dose before they enter kindergarten (4 to 6 years old). Not all children should get the MMR vaccine, so be sure to talk with your doctor first.



**Picture 1** Call the doctor if you are pregnant and get rubella.

## **When to Keep Your Child Home from School or Childcare**

Children who have been exposed to rubella and not had the vaccine should not go to school or childcare until they have their shots or a medical exemption.

Children who have rubella should not attend school or childcare because the illness is easily spread from one person to another. They may return to school or childcare 7 days after the rash develops.

## **When to Call the Doctor**

Call the doctor if:

- You are pregnant and get rubella.
- Your child with rubella is over 6 months old and has a fever over 102°F or under 6 months old with a temperature over 100.4°F.
- The symptoms do not go away after 3 days or your child seems to be getting sicker than the mild symptoms.