

Rubella (German Measles) Fact Sheet

What is Rubella?

Rubella or German Measles is a moderately contagious viral disease. The people most affected by it are school aged children and young adults in the late winter and early spring months. Complications are not common but tend to occur mostly in adults. Infection during pregnancy may cause birth defects including: deafness, cataracts, heart defects, mental retardation, and liver and spleen damage.

What are the symptoms?

- Low-grade fever
- Fatigue
- Swelling of lymph nodes (especially those in the back of the neck)
- A rash may appear all over the body
- In adults, pain and swelling in joints often occurs.

Symptoms occur 14-17 days after exposure.

How is it spread?

The virus is spread by direct contact with droplets produced by coughing and sneezing. It can be most easily spread during the period of time beginning 7 days before the rash appears, until 7 days after the rash appears.

How is it treated?

- There is no specific treatment.
- Getting enough rest and drinking plenty of fluids can help.
- A non-aspirin product (Tylenol or Advil) can be used to reduce fever and discomfort.
- Aspirin should not be used in children with rubella since there have been cases associated with the development of Reye Syndrome.

How is it prevented?

- The best way to prevent rubella is to be vaccinated against it. The vaccine is given in combination with the measles and mumps vaccine, known as Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) vaccine. Children and adults need to have 2 MMR injections to be completely immunized. Ask your doctor or clinic about the MMR vaccine.
- Due to what can happen from rubella infection during pregnancy, it is important for women of childbearing age to be vaccinated.
- A lab test can be done to test for immunity if a woman is unsure about having had rubella disease or the vaccine.

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information, call your health care provider or call the Bay County Health Dept at (989) 895-4003.

Visit our website at <http://www.baycounty-mi.gov/Health/> or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at www.cdc.gov