

Facts About Rubella for Adults

What is rubella?

Rubella, also called German measles, is caused by a virus that is spread from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Rubella is also spread by direct contact with nasal or throat secretions of an infected person. If a pregnant woman gets rubella during the first three months of pregnancy, her baby is at risk of having serious birth defects or dying.

Prevention

There is a safe and effective vaccine to protect against rubella. The vaccine is frequently given to adults as part of a combination injection that helps protect against measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR).

Symptoms

Symptoms may include: rash, slight fever, aching joints, headaches, discomfort, runny nose, and reddened eyes. The rash first appears on the face and progresses from head to toe. The lymph nodes just behind the ears and at the back of the neck may swell causing soreness and pain. Many people with rubella have few or no symptoms, and only about half of the people who have the disease get rashes. In most cases of rubella symptoms appear within 16-18 days.

Vaccine Safety

The rubella vaccine and the combined MMR vaccine are very safe. You cannot get rubella from the vaccine. The most common side effect is burning or stinging at the injection site. Other common side effects include mild fever, rash, headache, and general weakness. As with any medicine, there are very small risks that serious problems, even death, could occur after getting a vaccine. However, the risks from the disease are much greater than the risks from the vaccine.

Who should get MMR vaccine?

Susceptible adolescents and adults can be infected if they did not have rubella when they were children and have not been vaccinated. Those at particular risk include:

- Healthcare workers
- College and university students
- Women of childbearing age
- Childcare workers such as teachers and daycare personnel
- International travelers
- Those born after 1956 who have no proof of immunity

FACTS

- Rubella can be prevented with a safe, effective vaccine
- Most cases of rubella now occur among adults
- You can not get rubella from the vaccine
- Up to 10% of young adults are Non-immune to the rubella virus
- Rubella is contagious 7 days before up to 7 days after the rash appears
- As many as 12 million women of childbearing age are susceptible to rubella
- In most cases of rubella, symptoms appear within 16-18 days
- If a pregnant woman gets rubella during the first 3 months of pregnancy, her baby has a good chance of getting serious birth defects such as deafness, cataracts, heart defects, liver and spleen damage, and mental retardation. The baby may even die.

