

## What is rubella?

Rubella is a viral disease characterized by a slight fever, red rash, and swollen glands that lasts for about three days. Most cases are mild. Because of the vaccine, rubella is rare in the United States. However, outbreaks continue to occur in unvaccinated groups, and anyone who has not received the vaccine is at risk. Rubella can be imported into the United States at any time. In Oklahoma, there has only been one case of rubella since 1995, which occurred in 1999.

## What are the symptoms of rubella?

Rubella is a mild illness that may cause few or no symptoms. If a person has symptoms, they usually appear within 16 to 18 days after being exposed to the virus. Symptoms may include a rash, slight fever, joint aches, headache, discomfort, runny nose, and reddened eyes. The rash usually appears as raised or flat red dots and lasts for approximately three days. If you think you have symptoms of rubella, contact your health care provider or county health department.

## What are the complications of rubella?

Most persons infected with rubella will experience no complications associated with the disease. However, it can be very dangerous to the fetus of a pregnant woman. Rubella can cause babies to be born with defects such as blindness, hearing difficulties, heart problems, mental retardation, or the pregnancy can end in miscarriage. These conditions are referred to as congenital rubella syndrome (CRS).

## How is rubella spread, and how long can you spread rubella to others?

Rubella is passed from person-to-person through contact with infected nose and throat secretions or exposure to a cough or sneeze. People infected with the virus can spread it to others for about seven days before to seven days after rash onset. Infants infected with congenital rubella syndrome can spread the virus for months after birth.

## What is the treatment for rubella?

There is no treatment for rubella, however health care providers may treat the symptoms of rubella with bedrest and plenty of fluids.

## What precautions should be taken for pregnancy?

It is recommended that all women be tested for immunity to rubella before they become pregnant so they may become vaccinated if necessary. Vaccination will prevent rubella in women so their future children will be protected from the congenital rubella syndrome. Women who missed being tested prior to pregnancy are routinely tested during an early prenatal visit. If a pregnant woman is not immune, she should avoid anyone who has this illness. There is no effective treatment for rubella during pregnancy, nor is there an effective way to prevent rubella in an unvaccinated woman exposed to the illness. Pregnant women who are not immune should be vaccinated after delivery. A woman who is breastfeeding can safely be vaccinated. The vaccine is not recommended during pregnancy, and a woman should wait at least four weeks after vaccination before she attempts to conceive.

## Is there a rubella vaccine?

Yes. Rubella vaccine is given on or after a child's first birthday, and is usually given in combination with measles and mumps (MMR) vaccine. Children usually receive the first dose between 12 and 15 months of age and the second dose prior to school entry at four to six years of age.

## Is the rubella vaccine safe?

Yes, MMR is safe and effective in preventing rubella. However, like other medicines, it can cause side effects in some persons. Contact your local health care provider or your county health department for more information about the vaccine.

