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# Rubella (German Measles)

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## **What is rubella?**

- A mild disease caused by a virus.
- Rubella poses a serious threat during pregnancy. If a woman gets rubella during the first three months of pregnancy, birth defects (including heart problems, limb deformities, blindness, deafness or other problems) may occur.

## **How does a person get rubella?**

- The virus is spread by direct contact with airborne droplets from the nose and throat of an infected person.
- It can also be spread by direct contact with the saliva of an infected person by sharing drinking cups or utensils.
- Rubella is infectious for about 1 week before and at least 4 days after onset of the rash.

## **What are the signs and symptoms?**

- Symptoms occur 14 to 21 days after a person has been infected with the virus.
- A non-blotchy rash begins on the face and spreads to the body in 2 to 3 days.
- Other symptoms may include a short-lived, low-grade fever, fatigue, swollen glands, sore joints and sore watery eyes.

- Children will have few or no symptoms.
- A blood test is available to rule out other rash illnesses such as measles and Fifth's disease.

## **How is rubella treated?**

- There is no specific treatment.

## **How is rubella prevented?**

- Rubella vaccine is available and effective in preventing this disease.
- Avoid close contact with anyone who has rubella infection.
- Those who have had contact with a case of rubella should notify Public Health Services.
- Do not attend daycare, school or place of work for 7 days after the appearance of rash.

## **Who should be immunized?**

- It is recommended that children receive 2 doses of rubella containing vaccine (i.e. MMR or MMRV) after 12 months of age
- Adults are considered immune (protected) if they:
  - Were born in Canada prior to 1970
  - Were born since 1970 and have received rubella vaccine
  - Have had a blood test that indicates immunity (such as prenatal blood work).

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For more information, contact your doctor or  
Population and Public Health at **306-655-4612**

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