



Rubella

Rubella (or German measles) is an infectious disease that causes a spotty rash. It is not normally serious, but is very dangerous for a pregnant woman and her developing baby. Since the introduction of the MMR vaccine, rubella is now uncommon in the UK.

Catching rubella

Rubella is spread by coughs and sneezes.

A person with rubella is infectious from 1 week before the symptoms start until 5 days after the rash appears.

It is very important for a person with rubella to avoid close contact with anyone who is pregnant.

Symptoms of rubella



rash



fever



sore, red eyes



headache



painful joints in adult women

The main symptom of rubella is a spotty rash that starts on the face or behind the ears and spreads to the neck and body. The rash takes 2 to 3 weeks to appear after getting rubella. Other symptoms include coughing, sneezing, a runny nose, and a sore throat. Rubella is usually mild and some people do not show any symptoms.

Possible complications

If you get rubella in early pregnancy, it can cause miscarriage, stillbirth or problems with your unborn baby's growth and development. This can lead to serious problems for the baby including learning disabilities, blindness, deafness, growth problems and heart problems. There is no treatment or cure for rubella.



Call your midwife, maternity unit, or GP surgery immediately if you're pregnant and either:

- you have a new rash
- you've been in close contact with someone who has rubella

Rubella in numbers

If you get rubella in early pregnancy, there is a 1 in 5 chance of miscarrying your baby.



9 out of 10 babies that survive rubella infection in early pregnancy will be born with lifelong disabilities.



7 out of 10 adult women infected with rubella will experience painful joints.



Preventing rubella

MMR vaccination is the only way to prevent rubella.

Everyone needs two doses, ideally given at 1 year old and at 3 years 4 months old. The MMR vaccine also protects against measles and mumps.

The MMR vaccine works very well. After 2 doses, 99% of people will be protected against rubella.

The vaccine is free for everyone. If you or your child missed a dose, contact your GP surgery to catch up. You are never too old to have the vaccine.

1st dose age 1



2nd dose age 3 years and 4 months



More about rubella



(nhs.uk)

Congenital rubella syndrome: Ian's story



(YouTube.com)

More about the MMR vaccine



(nhs.uk)

This is not a diagnostic tool. If you think your child might have measles, call your GP surgery or 111 right away.

Developed by NHS North Central London Integrated Care Board.