

# Fact Sheet: Rubella (German Measles)

## What is Rubella?

Known as German Measles, Rubella is a moderately contagious viral disease. The people most frequently affected by rubella are school-age children and young adults in the late winter and early spring months. Complications from Rubella are not common but tend to occur mostly in adults. Rubella infection during pregnancy may cause birth defects.

## What are the Symptoms?

- Low-grade fever.
- Fatigue.
- Swelling of lymph glands (especially those in the back of the neck).
- A rash may appear and last up to 3 days.
- In adults, temporary 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. The virus 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 for Rubella.
- Getting sufficient rest and drinking plenty of fluids can be helpful.
- A non-aspirin product (acetaminophen, ibuprofen) can be used to reduce fever and discomfort.
- **Aspirin should not be used in children with viral illnesses, such as 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 the severe consequences of rubella infection during pregnancy, it is very important for women of childbearing age to know if they are protected against rubella.
- A lab test can be done 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 Washtenaw County Public Health at 734-544-6700.*

