



RUBELLA (German Measles)

What is RUBELLA?

Rubella or German measles is a very contagious disease caused by the rubella virus. As a result of widespread immunization, rubella does not circulate in the United States, but can be contracted through international travel.

How is rubella spread?

Rubella spreads by close person-to-person contact. Rubella can spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes and another person inhales the contaminated droplets. Rubella can also spread through infected saliva.

Who can get rubella?

Rubella is not common in children because most children are immunized by age 12 months. It is not usually a serious disease in children. However, in unprotected pregnant women, it may damage their unborn baby. Rubella still remains a common disease in many parts of the world and the risk of exposure to rubella outside the United States is high. Travelers should confirm their immunity status prior to traveling to countries where rubella cases still occur.

What are the symptoms?

Rubella is usually a mild illness, which may present few or no symptoms. Symptoms may include a rash, fever, joint and body aches, headache, runny nose, sore throat and red eyes. The lymph nodes behind the ears may swell. The rash, which may be itchy, first appears on the face and progresses from head to foot, lasting about three days. Some cases occur without a rash.

How soon do symptoms appear?

The symptoms usually appear about 14 days after exposure with a range of 12-23 days.

How long is a person able to spread rubella?

Persons with rubella are most infectious when the rash is erupting but they can shed the virus from seven days before to 5-7 days after the rash onset.

How is rubella treated?

Rubella is vaccine preventable. The rubella vaccine is part of the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine series given to children at 12 months of age and again at 4-6 years. There is no specific treatment for rubella other than supportive care.