



RUBELLA FACT SHEET

What is Rubella?

Rubella is an infection caused by a virus (germ) and can cause:-

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| Sore throat | - usually mild |
| Sore eyes | - often just a gritty feeling |
| Fever | - usually mild |
| Rash | - A pink rash which usually appears 2-3 days after the first symptoms, normally appearing on the face and neck first and then spreading to the body and limbs. |
| Swollen lymph glands | - Usually in the neck |
| Joint pain | - Usually in adults and can last for several weeks |

Rubella is usually a very mild illness which often causes children no real problems but may be worse in adults. Treatment is not usually required.

Who does it affect?

ANYONE- who has not developed a natural immunity, or has not been vaccinated against Rubella.

How do you get Rubella?

You get Rubella from being in close contact with someone who already has the infection. The virus is passed in the secretions of the infected person's nose and throat and is spread by their coughing and sneezing, and by close personal contact with that person like the contact that takes place within a household or family setting.

How do you prevent Rubella?

- By immunisation – there is an effective and safe vaccine to protect against Rubella. It is the 'R' component of the MMR vaccine and a child needs two doses, the first at 12 months and a booster dose pre-school. Protection will usually be life-long and both girls and boys need to be vaccinated. Also adults who have no history of immunisation and have not developed natural immunity, can be vaccinated but this is usually only required in special circumstances e.g. health care workers when a blood test will discover if you already have immunity. If a woman is planning to have a baby and she is unsure if she has ever had Rubella or has been vaccinated against Rubella, she should discuss this with her doctor or practice nurse and they will advise her.
- By avoiding close personal contact with a person with Rubella whenever possible if you think you are at risk e.g. a pregnant woman.

- As the Rubella vaccine is a 'live' vaccine it is not recommended that people with severely weakened immune systems or pregnant women be given the vaccine.

Do you need to stay off Work/School?

YES – Rubella is infectious for about 5-7 days before the rash appears and for 4-7 days after, so the general advice is to stay off school or work for **6 days after the rash first appears.**

What is special about Rubella?

Rubella is one of the few infections which **can affect the developing baby in a pregnant woman.** The risk to the baby depends upon when the mother gets the infection, the earlier in her pregnancy the higher the risk of the infection affecting the baby – in very late pregnancy the risks are very low. **Rubella infection can cause death of the baby, premature birth, hearing and sight defects, heart problems and mental defects,** so if a pregnant woman comes into contact with Rubella and she is unsure if she has previously had either the infection or the vaccination, she should **seek immediate advice** from her doctor or midwife, who will discuss her past history of Rubella infection or vaccination and take a blood specimen to test for past exposure and immunity to Rubella.

PHE East of England

Beacon House, Dunhams Lane, Letchworth Garden City SG6 1BE

Tel: 0300 303 8537 - Fax: 0300 303 8541

Email: smh@phe.gov.uk phe.smh@nhs.net

www.gov.uk/phe

v.1.00 03/09