[dkpdf-button]

# What is congenital rubella syndrome (CRS)?

Rubella is very dangerous for developing babies and can cause congenital rubella syndrome (CRS). When a woman gets rubella during pregnancy, there is a risk for miscarriage or stillbirth. The developing baby is at risk for severe birth defects with devastating, lifelong consequences. It is important to get vaccinated against rubella before getting pregnant to prevent infection.

# Who gets CRS?

CRS is a condition that affects a developing baby in the womb when the mother is infected with the rubella virus. Infection with rubella virus causes the most severe damage during early in pregnancy, especially in the first 12 weeks (first trimester). Because of widespread vaccination, rubella and CRS are rare in the United States.

# How is CRS spread?

Rubella spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes. If a pregnant woman is infected with rubella, she can pass rubella to her developing baby. When a baby is born with rubella, this is called CRS. Infants born with CRS can be contagious to caregivers for up to a year. They can transmit rubella to persons caring for them who are susceptible to the disease.

# What are the complications of CRS?

CRS can affect almost everything in the developing baby's body and can cause complications after birth. Deafness, eye abnormalities, and heart defects are the most common symptoms of CRS. Other complications include:

- Intellectual disabilities
- Liver and spleen damage
- Developmental delays
- Low birth weight

Other abnormalities such as spleen, liver or bone marrow problems.

# How soon do complications of CRS appear?

Complications of CRS are often apparent at birth. However, some complications, such as behavior disorders or developmental delays, do not appear until weeks, months, or years later.

# How is CRS diagnosed?

Laboratory tests on throat, urine, or blood samples are needed to confirm the diagnosis.

## What is the treatment for CRS?

There is no specific treatment for rubella in a pregnant woman that will prevent CRS in the infant.

## Do people who have been in contact with someone with CRS need to be tested and treated?

People that are non-immune for rubella and exposed to an infant with CRS are at risk of rubella infection.

## How can CRS be prevented?

Rubella can be prevented with MMR vaccine. It is important to get the MMR vaccine before pregnancy, if you are planning to become pregnant. The MMR vaccine is an attenuated (weakened) live virus vaccine and should not be given to a pregnant woman until after she has given birth. Rubella was declared eliminated from the United States in 2004. Cases occur rarely when unvaccinated people are exposed to infected people. This mostly happens through international travel. Talk to a healthcare provider if you have questions about the MMR vaccine.

## How can I get more information about CRS?

- If you have concerns about CRS, contact a healthcare provider.
- Contact your local health department
- Visit the CDC Pregnancy and Rubella page.

Opens pdf to download

Opens document to download

Opens in a new window

External link will open in new window.  Click link to exit Virginia Department of Health Website.