

[dkpdf-button]

What is rubella?

Rubella is an illness caused by the rubella virus. Rubella usually causes mild symptoms in children. However, rubella is very dangerous during pregnancy and for developing babies. Rubella is not the same as measles (rubeola), though the two illnesses do share some characteristics, including a red rash. Rubella is caused by a different virus than measles and is neither as infectious nor as severe as measles. Rubella is now rare in the United States due to widespread immunization.

Who gets rubella?

Rubella occurs more often in people who have never been vaccinated against rubella. Although eliminated in the United States, rubella is still common in other countries. The virus can be brought into the U.S. at any time by visitors who have rubella. Unvaccinated U.S. residents traveling abroad can become infected and bring the disease back home with them.

How is rubella spread?

Rubella virus is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

What are the symptoms of rubella?

Rubella is usually a mild illness. The most common symptoms in adults are low-grade fever, sore throat, and a rash that starts on the face and spreads to the rest of the body. In children, a rash on the face is usually the first sign. However, 25% to 50% of people with rubella may not develop any symptoms.

How soon after infection do symptoms appear?

Symptoms may begin within 12-23 days after an exposure with an average of 17 days after exposure.

How is rubella diagnosed?

A healthcare provider may consider rubella in a patient with a rash and other rubella symptoms, especially if they recently had international travel or were exposed to someone with a rash illness. Laboratory testing is needed to confirm that a person has rubella.

When and for how long is a person able to spread the disease?

A person with rubella may spread the disease to others up to 1 week before the rash appears and can remain contagious up to 7 days after. Rubella may also be transmitted by people with mild or no

symptoms. Infants with Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS) can spread rubella for up to one year and can transmit rubella to people caring for them who are susceptible to the disease.

What is the treatment for rubella?

There is no specific treatment for rubella, but medications to control fever or pain may provide relief of symptoms as the body fights the virus.

How can rubella be prevented?

Rubella can be prevented with MMR vaccine. This vaccine protects against three diseases: measles, mumps, and rubella. Two doses of MMR vaccine are recommended to protect children against rubella. Teens and adults should also be up to date on MMR vaccinations. 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. Talk to a healthcare provider if you have questions about the MMR vaccine.

How can I learn more about rubella?

- If you have concerns about rubella, contact a healthcare provider.
- Contact your local health department. You can find your local health department at vdh.virginia.gov/health-department-locator/
- Visit the CDC page on rubella at cdc.gov/rubella/ for more information.

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.