

## Rubella

**What is rubella?** It is an illness caused by a virus. It is rare today because most children get immunized against it. The illness lasts for about a week with:

- Red body rash
- Fever
- Swollen lymph nodes ("glands") at the back of the neck

*Although rubella is usually a mild illness, it can be dangerous for pregnant women because it can cause miscarriage, stillbirth, or severe birth defects in the baby.*

**How does rubella spread?** It spreads by:

- Being in a room together, coughing, and sneezing
- Touching mucus from the nose or saliva
- Kissing on the lips
- Sharing food, eating utensils, and mouthed toys

People who have had rubella before or were immunized usually can't catch it again.

**When is rubella contagious?**

- From several days *before* until five days *after* the start of the rash
- After exposure to rubella, it takes two to three weeks to get sick.

**How do I know if my child has rubella?** If you see the symptoms, take your child to the doctor. Rubella is diagnosed by the symptoms and a special blood test.

**What should I do if my child has rubella?**

**Treatment:** Follow your doctor's recommendations:

- Help the child recover by encouraging rest, nutrition, and plenty of fluids to drink.
- If anyone at home is pregnant, contact your doctor.*

**Keep your child home:** until six days after the rash appears and he or she feels well enough to participate in activities. Notify your Head Start program immediately.

**To limit the spread:**

- Immunize your children against rubella at 12 to 15 months of age and again at four to six or 11 to 12 years
- If you're planning pregnancy, see your doctor to get a blood test to see if you need the rubella vaccine to protect you and your baby.
- Report cases of rubella to the local health department.
- Don't expose infants, children who have not been immunized, or pregnant women.
- Wipe noses with clean tissues, throw them away, and wash your hands.
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow and away from people.

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## **Rubella Continued**

- Don't share food, pacifiers, bottles, or toothbrushes. Wash eating utensils, drinking cups, and mouthed toys well between uses.
- Don't kiss children on the mouth.
- Open windows indoors and maximize outdoor play.