

# Rubella (German measles)

## Fact Sheet

### What is Rubella?

Rubella (also known as German measles) is a contagious viral disease of humans. In most people rubella illness is mild, but infection in early pregnancy can cause serious birth defects or miscarriage.

### What are the symptoms of Rubella?

The symptoms may include a mild fever, runny nose, sore throat and swollen lymph glands and conjunctivitis. Rubella has a characteristic, flat, rose pink rash that begins on either the face or trunk and then quickly spreads over the rest of the body lasting for about 3 days. In some people it is possible to have rubella but not actually develop a rash. Aching joints are also common, especially in women.

In rare case, rubella infection can be complicated by lowering of the platelet count (thrombocytopenia) which can cause bleeding, or by encephalitis (inflammation of the brain).

### How did I acquire Rubella?

The time from exposure to onset of illness is usually 14-21 days. Rubella is contagious and people can be infectious for up to 1 week before they develop a rash. Therefore, you may have been unknowingly in contact with an infectious person, who may have sneezed or coughed on you, or you may have had contact with a contaminated item. If you have been caring for a person with rubella and are not immune to or vaccinated for rubella it is very easy for you to catch this virus.

### Who is at risk from Pneumococcal Meningitis?

The high-risk groups for rubella infection include:

- Pregnant women and developing babies, especially in the first sixteen weeks of pregnancy
- People who have not previously had rubella or been vaccinated for rubella

- Newborn babies who are too young to receive the vaccination and non-vaccinated children
- Anyone with a low immunity

### How can Rubella be spread?

Rubella is spread from an infected person by droplets from the nose or by direct contact.

Rubella is easily spread to people who have not been vaccinated or previously infected.

### How will my care change whilst in hospital?

- Regular and thorough hand hygiene is one of the most successful ways to prevent the spread of **ALL** infections.
- A sign is placed outside your door to alert hospital staff for the need to use special protective infection control precautions. This sign also alerts visitors of the need to speak with nursing staff prior to entering your room.
- The hospital staff will wear protective apparel such as gloves, an apron or gown and a mask, when they enter your room. These items are disposed of in a separate waste bin as the staff member leaves your room.
- You will be allocated a private room with your own en-suite facilities. The door of your room can remain open.
- Your movement throughout the ward will be limited to essential movement only, such as medical tests. If you need to leave your room, you will be required to wear a mask to prevent the spread of infection.

### Good Hand Hygiene Practices

Hand Hygiene is the most effective way to prevent **ALL** infections, including the flu and the common cold. Encourage your family and friends to learn and maintain good hand hygiene practices every day.

Please refer to the hand hygiene information in the patient information booklet or hand hygiene leaflet available from the Infection prevention and

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control team.

During your stay in hospital, you may have seen the staff using an alcohol-based hand rub, as an alternative to soap and water. Alcohol-based hand rubs or gels can be used for hand hygiene as long as your hands are not visibly soiled / dirty. There are a variety of brands on the market and are available for purchase at most pharmacies. You may choose to use this type of product at home.

### Can I still have visitors?

Yes – But visitors who SHOULD NOT come to see you are those who are pregnant or have not been immunised against rubella before, especially children, newborn babies and anyone who may have a lowered immunity. If you are unsure about having contact with your family and friends during your infectious stage, please speak to your doctor or ask to speak with the infection control nurse.

Whilst you are infectious, your visitors will be asked to wear a mask to protect them from infection; they may also be required to wear gloves and an apron if they are assisting you with care. The nursing staff will direct your visitors in applying and removing these items.

The nursing staff will educate your visitors on the need to perform hand hygiene before entering your room and when they leave your room. We would appreciate if you would also encourage your visitors to perform this hand hygiene, as this is the most effective way to prevent any infection.

### What happens when I go home?

- There are no special precautions required for the washing of clothes, linen, crockery, and cutlery or for the cleaning of the bath, toilet, and shower. But washing with hot water and wearing gloves is recommended.
- Children with rubella should be kept home and excluded from school and childcare centres until they are no longer infectious. Adults should stay home from work.

- People with rubella should stay at home for at least four days after onset of rash and avoid contact with non-immune people.
- Best protection against rubella is through vaccination with MMR, which protects against measles, mumps, and rubella, and MMRV vaccine which also protects against varicella (chicken pox). MMR vaccine should be given to children when they are 12 months and MMRV at 18 months of age.
- If you need to attend a hospital emergency department or your GP notify the receptionist of your infectious status on arrival, ask the receptionist to supply you with a face mask and sit away from other people.
- If any member of your household / or a carer is pregnant or not immune to rubella they should consult their doctor prior to you being discharged from hospital.
- When you return home, it is important for you, your family, and your friends to continue the good hand hygiene practices that you have been taught in hospital every day.

### Where can I get further information?

Talk to your doctor or the nurses caring for you. If you wish to speak with the Infection Control department, ask your nurse to contact us. Our office hours are 8am to 4pm Monday to Friday. Our contact numbers are:

- Office: (02) 9480 9433
- Office: (02) 9480 9732

**Alternatively contact your Local Public Health Unit 1300 066 055.**

### References

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