



## Rubella

February 2008

### What is rubella?

Rubella or 'German Measles', is a mild febrile viral illness. In unvaccinated populations, rubella is primarily a childhood disease and usually presents with few or no symptoms. In areas where children are fully vaccinated (2 doses), adolescent and adult infections are more common with symptoms of illness experienced over a 5 day period. Rubella occurs more frequently in winter and early spring.

### Incubation and infectious period?

The Incubation period (before symptoms appear) is between 14 and 21 days. However, the infectious period (able to infect other people) starts 7 days before the onset of symptoms and continues until 4 days after the onset of the rash.

### What are the signs and symptoms rubella?

The symptoms of rubella are rather like a mild cold, starting with a slight fever, sore throat and enlarged lymph glands in the neck and behind the ears, followed by a rash 2 - 3 days later. The rash which usually lasts about three days first appears on the face and progresses to the trunk and gradually works its way down the body. People who have had rubella disease are usually immune for life.

### How do you get rubella?

Rubella is spread by airborne droplets (coughing and sneezing) or by direct contact with nasal or throat secretions from infected people.

### How do I reduce the risks of getting rubella?

Children should be routinely vaccinated against rubella at 1 and 4 years of age. Rubella vaccination is included in with the measles, mumps vaccine (MMR). Two doses of MMR give protection against these diseases in over 95% of recipients. Women of childbearing age should check if they are immune to rubella preferably before considering pregnancy or during the first antenatal check, if they are not immune they should avoid contact with a person who has rubella for at least 7 days after the onset of their rash, and they should be vaccinated post delivery.

### Why is rubella vaccination important?

Rubella infection in the first 8 - 10 weeks of pregnancy can result in foetal (unborn baby) damage and may result in a miscarriage, stillbirth or the birth of an infant with abnormalities (e.g. deafness, cataracts, heart defects, liver and spleen damage and mental retardation). This is referred to as congenital rubella syndrome (CRS) and occurs in at least 25% of babies born to women who have had rubella during the first trimester of pregnancy.

### Treatment

There is no effective antiviral treatment for rubella, but parents are encouraged to give children plenty of fluids and paracetamol (as directed on the pack) for fever or joint pain. Aspirin is not recommended to children under 12 years.



## Where can I find more information on rubella?

- for more information contact your GP, or
- your local Public Health Unit

Public Health Unit	Telephone	Public Health Unit	Telephone
Kimberley	9194 1630	Great Southern	9842 7531
Midwest/Gascoyne	9956 1985	Pilbara	9172 8333
Southwest	9781 2350	Wheatbelt	9956 1985
Goldfields	9080 8200	North Metro (upper)	9345 7100
South Metro	9431 0200	North Metro (Lower)	9224 1603

### Internet:

- WA Department of Health: [www.public.health.wa.gov.au/1/51/2/immunisation.pm](http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/1/51/2/immunisation.pm)
- Australian Department of Health and Aging: [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)
- Centres for Disease Control: [www.cdc.gov/](http://www.cdc.gov/)
- Health Protection Agency: [www.hpa.org.uk/](http://www.hpa.org.uk/)

