

Rubella

Rubella is caused by a virus and is usually a mild illness. Rubella is now rare in Australia because we have a vaccine.

Symptoms begin like a cold, with a slight fever, sore throat and enlarged glands in the neck. A rash appears 2 to 3 days later, beginning on the face and spreading to the trunk. The spots are pale pink at first and join to form patches. The rash disappears after a few days.

How it spreads

Rubella spreads from person to person via droplets in the air that contain the virus. People can be infected by:

- breathing in droplets when an infected person breathes, coughs or sneezes on them or near them
- direct contact with infected saliva – for example, sharing a cup or eating utensils with an infected person
- touching a surface contaminated with droplets – for example, hands, tissues or toys – and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

Vaccination against rubella is included in the measles–mumps–rubella (MMR) vaccine, which is part of the routine childhood vaccination schedule in the Australian National Immunisation Program.

Exclusion period

Exclude until the person has fully recovered or for at least 4 days after the rash appears.

Risks in pregnancy

If a woman catches rubella during pregnancy, the virus can pass to her baby through the bloodstream. If this happens, there is a risk of miscarriage or serious birth defects, especially if infection occurs in the first 16 weeks of pregnancy.

If you are pregnant and have been exposed to rubella, see your doctor to get a blood test to check if you are immune. You can protect yourself by getting vaccinated **before** becoming pregnant. For more information, see pregnancybirthbaby.org.au/rubella-and-pregnancy.

Actions for educators and other staff

Follow the exclusion period in the *Staying healthy* guidelines.

Contact your local public health unit for advice if you have a case of rubella in your service. In New South Wales and the Northern Territory, education and care services must notify their local public health unit about any cases of rubella in the service.

All staff should be immunised. However, vaccination during pregnancy is not recommended.

If pregnant staff members are concerned, refer them to their doctor.

Ensure staff and children have good hand and respiratory hygiene.

Ensure staff use appropriate cleaning practices, as described in the *Staying healthy* guidelines.

Actions for parents and carers

Make sure your child is immunised against rubella by keeping their childhood vaccinations up to date.

If your child has rubella, keep them at home for at least 4 days after the rash appears, and until they feel well again.

Tell any pregnant friends or family who may have been exposed to see their doctor.

Teach your child to cough or sneeze into a tissue, then throw the tissue into a bin and wash their hands. If there are no tissues nearby, teach them to cough or sneeze into their inner elbow instead of their hands.

Make sure your child washes their hands thoroughly and often.

More information about rubella

See healthdirect for more information on prevention, diagnosis and treatment of rubella (healthdirect.gov.au/rubella-german-measles).

To find out if a child needs medical help:

- use the online symptom checker (healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker)
- speak to a registered nurse by calling the 24-hour health advice hotline on 1800 022 222.