

Rubella

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What is rubella?

Rubella, sometimes called “German measles,” is a disease caused by a virus. The infection is usually mild with fever and rash, but if a pregnant mother gets infected, the virus can also cause serious birth defects. The MMR vaccine protects against rubella.

What are the symptoms of rubella?

Rubella usually causes the following symptoms in children:

- Rash that starts on the face and spreads to the rest of the body
- Low fever (less than 101 degrees)

These symptoms last 2 or 3 days.

Older children and adults may also have swollen glands and symptoms like a cold before the rash appears. Aching joints occur in many cases, especially among young women.

About half of the people who get rubella do not have symptoms.

How serious is rubella?

In children, rubella is usually a mild disease. In rare cases, serious problems can occur. These include brain infections and bleeding problems.

Rubella is most dangerous for unborn babies. It can cause miscarriage or birth defects like deafness, intellectual disability, and heart defects. As many as 85 out of 100 babies born to mothers who had rubella in the first 3 months of pregnancy will have a birth defect.

How does rubella spread?

Rubella spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

The disease is most contagious when the person has a rash. But it can spread up to 7 days before the rash appears. People without symptoms can still spread rubella.

Benefits of the MMR vaccine

- Saves lives.
- Protects young children from serious disease.
- Keeps others safe.

Side effects of the MMR vaccine

- The most common side effects are usually mild and include the following:
 - Fever in 1 out of 6 people.
 - Mild rash in 1 out of 20 people.
- Swollen glands in the cheeks or neck in very few people.
- Fever high enough to cause a seizure (jerking or staring) occurs in 1 out of 3,000 people. These seizures do not cause any long-term harm.
- Temporary joint pain and stiffness (mostly in teens and adults).
- Serious allergic reaction to the MMR vaccine occurs in fewer than 1 in a million people.

What is the MMR vaccine?

The MMR is a shot that combines vaccines for three diseases—measles, mumps, and *rubella*. It protects children from rubella by preparing their bodies to fight the rubella virus. Almost all children (at least 95 children out of 100) who get two doses of the MMR vaccine will be protected from rubella.

When should my child get the MMR vaccine?

Children need two doses of the MMR vaccine at the following ages for best protection:

- One dose at 12 through 15 months; and
- A second dose at 4 through 6 years of age.

They can get MMR at the same time as other vaccines.



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Why should my child get the MMR vaccine?

Getting your child the MMR vaccine protects him against rubella (and two other very contagious diseases: measles and mumps). It also helps stop the spread of disease in the community.

Is the MMR vaccine safe?

The MMR vaccine is very safe, and it is effective at preventing rubella (as well as measles and mumps). Vaccines, like any medicine, can have side effects. Most children who get the MMR vaccine have no side effects. Those that do occur are typically very mild, such as a fever or rash.

The MMR vaccine is made from weakened virus, so it cannot give your child rubella, measles, or mumps.

If my child does not get the MMR vaccine, will he get rubella?

Children who have not had the MMR vaccine and are exposed to rubella could get sick.

Before the MMR vaccine, more than 50,000 people in the U.S. got rubella each year. After the vaccine, the number of cases dropped greatly, to fewer than 1,000.

Rubella is no longer circulating naturally in the U.S., but it is found in other countries, and people with rubella can travel to the U.S. anytime. Thus, rubella outbreaks still occur among groups of people who are not vaccinated.

Is the MMR vaccine linked with autism?

No, many large and reliable studies of MMR vaccine have been done in the U.S. and other countries. None has found a link between autism and the MMR vaccine.

There are a couple of reasons people believe autism is linked to vaccination. The first is because sometimes signs of autism don't appear until around the age the MMR vaccine is given. If a child is diagnosed shortly after getting vaccinations, this may seem like cause and effect.

Why is rubella called "German measles"?

Rubella is often called "German measles," but it is not related to measles at all. It got this name because the rash caused by rubella looks like measles, and the disease was first discovered in Germany.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Academy of Family Physicians, and American Academy of Pediatrics strongly recommend all children receive the MMR vaccine according to the recommended schedule.

What can I do to protect my child from rubella?

- ✓ Vaccinate your child on time.
- ✓ Talk with your child's doctor if you have questions.
- ✓ Keep a record of your child's vaccinations to make sure your child is up-to-date.

Another reason some people think MMR is linked to autism is a study published in 1998 from the United Kingdom. One of the authors claimed that the MMR vaccine could contribute to the development of autism. That study got a lot of attention in the news. Since 1998, 10 out of 13 of the study's authors have withdrawn their support of the study, and the journal has retracted it.

Where can I learn more about the MMR vaccine?

To learn more about MMR or other vaccines, talk to your child's doctor.

Call **800-CDC-INFO** (800-232-4636) or go to <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines> and check out the following resources:

- Vaccines and Preventable Diseases—Rubella (German Measles) Vaccination: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/rubella/>
- Common Questions Parents Ask about Infant Immunizations: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/spec-grps/infants/parent-questions.htm>
- Vaccines website for parents: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents>