

Rubella and the Vaccine (Shot) to Prevent It

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The best way to protect against rubella is by getting the measles-mumps-rubella shot (called the MMR shot). Doctors recommend that all children get the MMR shot.

Why should my child get the MMR vaccine?

The MMR shot:

- Protects your child from rubella, a potentially serious disease (and also protects against measles and mumps)
- Prevents your child from spreading rubella to a pregnant woman, whose unborn baby could develop serious birth defects or die if his mother gets rubella
- Prevents your child from getting a rash and fever from rubella
- Keeps your child from missing school or childcare (and keeps you from missing work to care for your sick child)

Is the MMR shot safe?

Yes. The MMR shot is very safe, and it is effective at preventing measles, mumps, and rubella. Vaccines, like any medicine, can have side effects. Most children who get the MMR shot have no side effects.

What are the side effects?

Most children don't have any side effects from the shot. When side effects do occur, they are usually very mild, such as a fever or rash. More serious side effects are rare. These may include high fever that could cause a seizure (in about 1 out of every 3,000 people who get the shot) and temporary pain and stiffness in joints (mostly in teens and adults).

Is there a link between the MMR shot and autism?

No. Scientists in the United States and other countries have carefully studied the MMR shot. None has found a link between autism and the MMR shot.

What is rubella?

Rubella, sometimes called "German measles," is a disease caused by a virus. The infection is usually mild with fever and a rash. But, if a pregnant woman gets infected, the virus can cause serious birth defects.

What are the symptoms of rubella?

In children, rubella usually causes the following symptoms that last 2 or 3 days:

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

Before the rash appears, older children and adults may also have:

- Swollen glands
- Cold-like symptoms
- Aching joints (especially in young women)

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



Doctors recommend that your child get 2 doses of MMR vaccine for best protection. Your child will need one dose at each of the following ages.

- 12 through 15 months and
- 4 through 6 years



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Is it serious?

Rubella is usually mild in children. Complications are not common, but they occur more often in adults. In rare cases, rubella can cause serious problems, including brain infections and bleeding problems.

Rubella is most dangerous for a pregnant woman's unborn baby. Infection during pregnancy can cause miscarriage, or birth defects like deafness, blindness, 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 infected person has a rash. But it can spread up to 7 days before the rash appears. People without symptoms can still spread rubella.

Where can I learn more about the MMR shot and my child?

To learn more about the MMR shot, talk to your child's doctor, call 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents.



Rubella is dangerous for a pregnant woman. If she gets rubella, she can have a miscarriage, or her baby could be born with certain birth defects.