



German measles (rubella)

- **German measles, also known as rubella, is a mild viral illness. It is a different disease to measles.**
- **Most people recover quickly from this infection.**
- **It can be very serious in pregnant women, as it can cause congenital birth defects.**

German measles is most serious for pregnant women, as infection in the first 20 weeks of pregnancy can result in serious harm to the unborn baby, resulting in congenital abnormalities such as deafness, blindness, and heart disease.

Outbreaks occur more frequently in winter and early spring.

How do you get German measles?

German measles is usually spread when a person breathes in the virus that has been coughed or sneezed into the air by an infected person. You can also get German measles by touching the saliva or mucus of an infected person.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Symptoms appear between 14 and 21 days after exposure.

The symptoms of German measles are rather like a cold, along with:

- slight fever
- sore throat
- enlarged lymph glands in the neck and behind the ears.
- This is followed by a rash 2 to 3 days later. The rash usually lasts about 3 days, first appearing on the face and then working its way down the body.

People are infectious from 7 days before symptoms start until 4 days after the rash appears.

How do I know I have German measles?

See your doctor if you or your child is unwell with a fever that is followed by a rash.

Your doctor may advise you or your child to have some tests, for example a throat swab or a blood test, to confirm if you have the infection.

Caution: when making your doctor's appointment, tell the staff that you or your child may be infectious. You will need to wait in a separate area from others, especially young children.



How is German measles treated?

There is no specific treatment for German measles, but if you have been diagnosed with the virus, you should drink plenty of fluids and take paracetamol for fever or joint pain.

Parents whose child has German measles should encourage their children to drink plenty of fluid. Parents should discuss with a doctor what kind of medication they can give their child. Aspirin is not recommended for children under 12.

While you have the infection

You can prevent the spread of the infection by following this advice:

- Stay away from work, school, group gatherings and anyone who may not be immune, until 4 days after the rash appears.
- Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing
- Wash your hands thoroughly with warm soapy water for at least 15 seconds after blowing your nose and handling used tissues.

How can German measles be prevented?

German measles can be prevented through vaccination

The measles, mumps and rubella (MMR vaccine) is available and offered to all children when they are 1.

Women should check if they are immune to German measles, preferably before trying to get pregnant or during the first antenatal check. If they are found not to be immune, they will be offered a vaccination after the birth of their baby.

Why is vaccination important?

Rubella infection in the first 20 weeks of pregnancy can result in serious harm to the unborn child, that can lead to congenital abnormalities such as deafness, cataracts, blindness and heart defects.

Where to get help

- See your doctor
- Visit a GP after hours
- Visit *healthdirect* or call 1800 022 222



Remember

- German measles is a mild viral infection.
- It can be very serious in pregnant women, as it can cause congenital birth defects.
- Vaccination in children is recommended at 1, however vaccination is also available to women planning pregnancy.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

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