



Weill Cornell Medical College

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Patient Education:

Rubella, Pediatric

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Rubella, Pediatric

Rubella, also known as German measles, is a highly contagious viral infection. It typically occurs in children who are between 5 and 15 years old. The infection is characterized by a low fever and pinkish rash. In children, the infection is usually mild and goes away on its own.

CAUSES

Rubella is caused by a virus. The virus is spread in droplets that are sprayed when a contagious person talks, sneezes, or coughs. A person with rubella is contagious from about 1 week before the rash appears until about 1 week after it goes away.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Symptoms usually appear 2–3 weeks after your child is exposed to the virus. The most common symptoms are:

- A pinkish rash. The rash often starts on the face and then spreads to the rest of the body.
- A mild fever.
- Swollen glands.
- Cold symptoms right before the rash appears. These may include:
 - Aching joints.
 - Nasal congestion.
 - A runny nose.
 - A sore throat.

Some children who get rubella do not have symptoms.

DIAGNOSIS

Your child's health care provider may diagnose rubella based on:

- A physical exam.
- Your child's medical history and symptoms.
- Saliva or blood tests to check for rubella antibodies.

TREATMENT

Treatment may involve:

- Rest.
- Drinking plenty of fluids.
- Over-the-counter medicines to reduce pain or fever.

Symptoms of rubella infection will go away on their own.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Keep your child away from other people for at least 7 days after the rash has completely gone away or as directed by your child's health care provider.
- Have your child rest as needed. Your child may need more rest during the fever phase.
- Have your child drink enough fluid to keep his or her urine clear or pale yellow.
- Give medicines only as directed by your child's health care provider. **Do not** give your child aspirin because of the association with Reye syndrome. **Do not** give ibuprofen to children under 6 months old.
- Ask your child's health care provider when your child may return to school or day care. Usually, your child will be allowed to return to school or day care 1 week after your child's rash completely goes away.
- If your child comes in contact with a pregnant woman, notify her that your child has rubella so she may tell her health care provider. If a pregnant woman is exposed to the infection during her first trimester of pregnancy, the infection can cause severe birth defects in her baby.

PREVENTION

Rubella can be prevented by vaccination. All children should receive the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine. The vaccine requires two doses, one given at 12–15 months of age and the other given at 4–6 years of age.

A combination vaccine called measles, mumps, rubella, varicella (MMRV) vaccine is also available.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your child's fever lasts more than 5 days.
- Your child's rash becomes itchy.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your child develops confusion.
- Your child becomes more and more ill.
- Your child develops a severe headache.
- Your child develops severe neck pain.
- Your child's rash becomes purple.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your child's condition.
- Will get help if your child is not doing well or gets worse.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.

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