

What is rubella?

Rubella is a viral illness that can cause a slight fever, red rash, and swollen glands that lasts for about 3 days. Most cases are mild. Since most people get the vaccine, rubella is rare in the United States. However, outbreaks continue to occur in groups that have not gotten the vaccine, and anyone who has not received the vaccine is at risk. Rubella can be brought into the United States at any time. In Oklahoma, there was one case during 2011, but before that the last case was in 1999.

What are the symptoms of rubella?

Rubella is a mild illness that may cause few or no symptoms. If a person has symptoms, they usually appear within 16 to 18 days after being exposed to the virus. Symptoms may include a rash, slight fever, joint aches, headache, discomfort, runny nose, and reddened eyes. The rash usually appears as raised or flat red dots and lasts for about 3 days. If you think you have symptoms of rubella, contact your healthcare provider or county health department.

What are the problems of rubella?

Most persons infected with rubella will experience no problems from the disease. However, it can be very harmful to the fetus of a pregnant woman. Rubella can cause babies to be born with defects such as blindness, hearing problems, heart problems, mental retardation, or the pregnancy can end in miscarriage. These conditions are referred to as congenital rubella syndrome (CRS).

How is rubella spread, and how long can you spread rubella to others?

Rubella is passed from person-to-person through contact with infected nose and throat fluids or coming into contact with a cough or sneeze. People with the virus can spread it to others for about 7 days before to 7 days after the rash appears. Infants with congenital rubella syndrome can spread the virus for months after birth.

What is the treatment for rubella?

There is no treatment for rubella; however, doctors may treat the symptoms of rubella with bed rest and plenty of fluids.

What safety measures should be taken for pregnancy?

All women should be tested for immunity to rubella before they become pregnant so they can receive the vaccine if needed. Getting the vaccine will prevent rubella in women so their future children will be protected from the congenital rubella syndrome. Women who missed being tested prior to getting pregnant are regularly tested during an early prenatal visit. If a pregnant woman is not immune, she should avoid anyone who has symptoms of this illness. There is no helpful treatment for rubella during pregnancy, nor is there a successful way to prevent rubella in a woman who has not received the vaccine and has been in contact with the illness. Pregnant women who are not immune should receive the vaccine after delivery. A woman who is breastfeeding can safely receive the vaccine. The vaccine is not advised during pregnancy, and a woman should wait at least 4 weeks after she has received the vaccine before she attempts to get pregnant.

Is there a rubella vaccine?

Yes. Rubella vaccine is given on or after a child's first birthday, and is usually given with the measles and mumps (MMR) vaccine. Children usually receive the first dose between 12 and 15 months of age and the second dose prior to school entry at 4 to 6 years of age.

Is the rubella vaccine safe?

Yes, the MMR vaccine is safe and works in preventing rubella. However, like other medicines, it can cause side effects in some persons. Contact your local healthcare provider or your county health department for more information about the vaccine.

OSDH 04/2013



Acute Disease Service
Oklahoma State
Department of Health

For further information contact:
Acute Disease Service
Oklahoma State Department of Health
(405) 271-4060
<http://ads.health.ok.gov>