

Rubella (German Measles)

What is rubella?

A mild viral infection usually lasting 3 days that is now rare in the United States because of routine immunization

What are the signs or symptoms?

- Many children have no signs or symptoms.
- Red or pink rash appearing first on the face, then spreading downward over the body.
- Swollen glands behind ears.
- Slight fever.
- May experience joint aches and/or pain (rare in children; more common in adults).

What are the incubation and contagious periods?

- Incubation period: 14 to 23 days; usually 16 to 18 days
- Contagious period: May be spread 7 days before to 14 days after the rash; however, children are most contagious from 3 to 4 days before rash starts until 7 days after the rash.

How is it spread?

- Respiratory route (droplets from sneezing or coughing)
- Direct contact with nose or throat secretions

How do you control it?

- Immunize according to the current recommendations, when a child is 12 to 15 months of age and with a second dose at 4 to 6 years of age.
- Review immunization status of all children.
- Unimmunized children should be excluded from group care settings if there is an outbreak.

What are the roles of the caregiver/teacher and the family?

- Report the infection to staff designated by the child care program or school for decision making and action related to care of ill children. That person, in turn, alerts possibly exposed family members and staff to watch for symptoms.
- Report the infection to the health department, as the health professional who makes the diagnosis may not report that the child who has the infection is a participant in a child care program or school, and this could lead to precious time for controlling the spread of the disease being lost.
- Staff who care for children should have immunity documented because rubella infection during pregnancy can result in miscarriage, fetal death, or severe abnormalities in the formation and function of organ systems in the fetus, including mental retardation.

Exclude from group setting?

Yes.

- Rubella is a highly communicable illness for which routine exclusion of infected children is warranted.
- For outbreaks, exclude exposed children who have not been immunized (or, if older than age 4–6 years, received less than 2 doses of vaccine) until they become immunized or, if they are not immunized because of an accepted exemption, continue to exclude them until the health department determines it is safe for them to return. This may be more than 3 weeks.

Readmit to group setting?

- Seven days after onset of rash
- When the child is able to participate and staff determine that they can care for the child without compromising their ability to care for the health and safety of the other children in the group

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