

WHO SHOULD NOT HAVE MMR?

Your immunisation provider will complete a pre-immunisation checklist before administering the vaccine. This will identify people with certain conditions such as:

- Those allergic to a previous dose of MMR vaccine or components of the vaccine.
- Women who are already pregnant or planning to become pregnant within one month of immunisation.
- Anyone with an illness or receiving treatment which suppresses the immune system such as cortisone or prednisolone.
- Anyone suffering a fever with a temperature above 38.5° C on the day of immunisation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Discuss with your doctor or immunisation provider.
- Ask your local government immunisation service.
- Ask a maternal and child health nurse.
- Family planning clinics have information.
- Better Health Channel:
www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
- Rubella Education Nurse, Deafness Foundation
Phone (03) 9887 8683
Email rubella@deafness.org.au
Web www.deafness.org.au

LANGUAGE TRANSLATIONS

This pamphlet is available in other community languages from Deafness Foundation. Language assistance may be gained through the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS). Free Call on 13 14 50.

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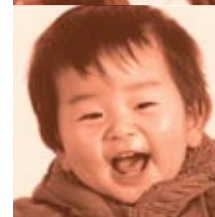
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RUBELLA



Important facts about Rubella for the whole community



WHAT IS RUBELLA?

Rubella (also called German measles) is a highly contagious viral infection which can affect children, teenagers and adults. It is a different disease to measles and is caused by a different virus.

Typical symptoms of rubella include a slight fever, swollen glands, joint pains and a rash starting on the face and neck which lasts two or three days. Rubella infection may sometimes occur with few or no symptoms.

Rubella infection is most dangerous when women are infected during the first 20 weeks of pregnancy. As a result, the mother may miscarry or the baby can be born with deafness, blindness, heart defects and intellectual disabilities. This condition is known as Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS).



HOW IS RUBELLA SPREAD?

Rubella is spread in a similar way to the common cold and can be caught through coughs and sneezes from an infected person. The symptoms of rubella usually take about two weeks to develop and people may not realise they have the disease. During this time, they may spread the disease to others including women in the early stages of pregnancy who do not have immunity. Early pregnancy is the time when the unborn baby is most at risk.

HOW CAN WE PREVENT RUBELLA AND CRS?

Rubella and Congenital Rubella Syndrome can be prevented! The best way to prevent birth abnormalities due to rubella is to ensure that all women are immunised with a vaccine which contains rubella, usually measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine, well BEFORE pregnancy.

Women should avoid pregnancy for one month following MMR immunisation and those who are already pregnant should not be immunised until AFTER delivery.

A blood test BEFORE EACH pregnancy is important to check that a woman still has adequate immunity to rubella *even if she has been immunised*. If the blood test shows no or low immunity a dose of MMR or rubella vaccine should be given. A further blood test is done six to eight weeks later to ensure that the vaccine has provided adequate protection.

In Australia, it is recommended that all children have two separate doses of MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine from one year of age as part of the National Immunisation Program. This protects against all three diseases.

Older children and adults born after 1965 may lack immunity to rubella. If so they may become infected and infect others. Unless they have documented evidence of having had two doses of MMR vaccine or a blood test showing immunity, they should seek immunisation with MMR vaccine. Immunising men, women and children with MMR vaccine helps stop the spread of these infections in the community.

WHO IS MOST AT RISK?

Rubella vaccine is not provided in all childhood vaccination programs around the world. People who have migrated to Australia from such countries may not be immune, especially if they came to Australia after the age of four years. In particular, women born in Asian and African countries are urged to have rubella immunisation before their first pregnancy since many of them will not have protection.

Having had a rubella infection during childhood or later does not guarantee protection against rubella. A blood test before each pregnancy is required to confirm immunity.

WHERE IS IMMUNISATION AVAILABLE?

Your local doctor, family planning clinic, community health centre and local government immunisation service can provide the MMR vaccine.

REACTIONS

Reactions to MMR vaccine are much less significant than the complications of rubella infection in pregnancy. The most common reactions are feeling unwell, a fever, tenderness of the lymph glands and possibly a rash five to twelve days after immunisation. People who have been immunised are not infectious to others. Serious reactions to the vaccine are very rare probably occurring at the rate of less than one in a million doses. Risks and benefits can be discussed with your doctor.