Rubella Encyclopedia Article

Rubella

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Contents

Rubella Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Rubella.....3

Rubella

A highly contagious disease, also known as German or three-day measles, for which there is a vaccine available.

Rubella, or German measles, is caused by the rubella virus. Since 1969, an **immunization** has been given to nearly all children in industrialized countries. German measles is a highly contagious disease caused by the rubella virus. It is spread through air-borne droplets introduced into the environment when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or even talks. In 1969, a vaccine was introduced that has nearly eliminated German measles from Westernized countries. When young children are infected, the symptoms are usually a mild, low-grade **fever** for one or two days and a rash on the face or neck for about three days. As children get older, infection with rubella causes more severe symptoms, including swollen glands in the neck and stiffness in the joints. The rubella virus can cause serious **birth defects** if a woman contracts it during **pregnancy.** In the 1960s, thousands of babies were either miscarried or born with birth defects including deformed limbs, blindness, deafness, abnormally small brains, and **mental retardation** due to German measles. Any unimmunized woman considering pregnancy should receive the vaccine at least three months prior to getting pregnant. The rubella vaccine is normally given at 15 months of age in combination with the vaccines for measles and **mumps.**

See Also

Immunization.

For Further Study

Organizations

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIADID)
Address: 9000 Rockville Pike
NIH Building 31, Room 7A50
Bethesda, MD 20892-2520
Telephone: (301) 496-5717
(Arm of the National Institutes of Health that deals with allergies and diseases.)

National Vaccine Information Center
Address: 128 Branch Road
Vienna, VA 22180