

## Rubella

Rubella infection is caused by a virus. Clinical disease is usually mild and characterized by a rash, swollen glands, and slight fever. The rash starts on the face and spreads in the first 24 hours and lasts usually 3 days. Glands may become swollen for 5 to 8 days. Transient arthritis is common in teenagers and adults, especially females. Encephalitis is a rare complication. **Infection during pregnancy can result in miscarriage, fetal death, and severe birth defects.**

Humans are the only source of this infection, and the virus is spread through direct or droplet contact from nose and saliva secretions. The peak incidence of infection is during the late winter and early spring. The virus can be spread a few days prior to the onset of symptoms and up to 7 days after the onset of the rash. There is no treatment other than supportive care if a person becomes infected with this virus.

The incidence of Rubella in the United States has decreased by 99% from the pre-vaccine era. Currently, fewer than 25 cases are reported in the United States annually. More recent outbreaks have occurred in foreign born and underimmunized individuals. In the vaccine era, most cases in the 1970s and 80s occurred in young, unimmunized adults in outbreaks on college campuses and occupational settings. Although the number of susceptible people has decreased since the introduction and widespread use of the vaccine, recent surveys of serum samples indicate that approximately 10% of the United States born population older than 5 years of age is susceptible to Rubella.

One dose of the vaccine is recommended for babies 12 months or older, and a booster dose should be given prior to school entry, between the ages of 4 and 6 years of age. Side effects of the vaccine include fever, which develops in 5 to 15% of people 6 to 12 days after immunization. A rash may occur in 5% of immunized people. Other symptoms include mild gland swelling and joint pain.