

7. RUBELLA (GERMAN MEASLES)

Date: _____

Dear Parent or Guardian,

There has been a case of rubella within your child's school and your child may have been exposed. MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine is given at 12 months of age and as a preschool booster at 4-5 years. If your child received two MMR vaccines the chance of him/her developing rubella is extremely low. If, however, your child has not been vaccinated then it is quite possible that he/she might get rubella.

What is rubella?

Rubella is a mild viral illness that causes little problem for children. In childhood it causes a mild flu like illness with mild swelling of the glands, particularly those at the back of the neck, and a fine pinkish red rash. In addition adults can develop painful joints (arthritis).

Why should I be concerned about rubella?

If a pregnant woman develops rubella in the early stages of pregnancy her unborn baby may also be infected and the consequences can be devastating. Rubella infection in the unborn can cause severe developmental delay, eye defects, hearing problems and a wide variety of congenital abnormalities.

Who gets rubella?

Anyone who is not immune to it and who has contact with someone with rubella can get rubella. People who have either received rubella vaccine (part of the MMR) or who have had rubella should be immune. A simple blood test can tell whether or not you are immune to it. As many viral illnesses are similar to rubella, and are often mistaken for it, you cannot consider yourself immune unless you have had the blood test or been vaccinated with the rubella or MMR vaccine.

What should I do now?

If you and your child have received rubella vaccine or you have been tested and know that you are immune, there is no need for concern. If your child has not received MMR vaccine, bring them to your GP for vaccination. The vaccine will not protect them if they have been exposed this time, but it will protect them from future exposures. If you are pregnant or likely to become pregnant, please contact your GP and find out whether or not you are immune to rubella. If you are not immune (and are not pregnant) you should contact your GP and arrange to get the vaccine.

What should I do if I think my child has rubella?

If your child develops a flu-like illness, with a fine red rash and swelling of the glands behind the ears, arrange for your doctor to see the child. He will be able to tell you if it looks like rubella and will advise you what to do. If you suspect rubella, do not bring your child into a crowded surgery waiting room, as this may only spread the infection further. There is no treatment for rubella and symptoms resolve over a few days.

Can my child stay in school?

Children with rubella must stay at home until at least seven days after the appearance of the rash.

Thank you for giving this your attention. Your GP will be able to answer any further questions that you might have about rubella and the MMR vaccine.