

**MSAD # 13 / RSU #83
Health Alert**

**Rubella
(German Measles)
(Three Day Measles)
Important Notice to Parents**

Rubella is a mild rash illness caused by the rubella virus. The first signs of rubella in children may be swollen, tender glands, usually at the back of the neck and behind the ears; and a low-grade fever followed by a rash. The rash often fades or turns red and is most evident after a hot shower. Adults may experience a 1–5 day prodrome (early signs of onset), consisting of respiratory symptoms. The rash usually consists of pink to red isolated spots that appear first on the face then spread rapidly to the trunk, biceps, and thigh areas of the extremities with large areas of flushing. The rash usually fades within 3 days. Fever is often mild or absent. Some itching may occur. Rubella in adolescents and adults may cause painful or swollen joints (especially in females). Its importance lies not in the problems it causes in the person who acquires the disease, but rather in the significant congenital defects it may cause in infants whose mothers contracted rubella during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. Because many other rash illnesses look like rubella, laboratory tests are required to confirm the diagnosis. Up to 50 percent of rubella cases are asymptomatic.

Transmission occurs through direct or droplet contact with nasopharyngeal secretions of infected persons. It is also transmitted across the placenta to the fetus. Infants with congenital rubella can shed large quantities of the virus from their respiratory secretions and in the urine.

The incubation period is normally from 12 - 23 days, usually from 14 - 18 days.

An infected person is contagious from seven days prior to the appearance of the rash through seven days after the rash appears.

To help prevent spread of the virus, students should never share items that may be contaminated with saliva such as beverage containers. All articles soiled with nose and throat discharges should be disposed of or cleaned. Students should cover their mouth with tissue when coughing or sneezing. If no tissue is available, students should be encouraged to “catch your cold in your elbow” by covering their mouth and nose with the crook of their arm and coughing or sneezing into their shirt or coat sleeve. Proper hand washing techniques should always be observed.

A live, attenuated virus vaccine is available in combination with the measles and mumps vaccine (MMR) at the age of 12-15 months. A second vaccination is usually given between 4-5 years of age. Vaccination is required for school entry in Maine. Parents/guardians should be encouraged to have their children vaccinated on time.

Individuals with a confirmed case of rubella should be excluded from school and isolated as directed by the Maine Center for Disease Control. Students who are attending school but have not been immunized will also be excluded from school as directed by the Maine CDC.

Exposed pregnant women should be tested for rubella immunity, if unknown, and should consult their healthcare provider. Pregnant contacts of the student should be notified of their exposure and advised to contact their licensed health care provider immediately to discuss the status of their immunity to rubella. A blood test is available to identify those that lack immunity to rubella.

Because of the theoretical risk to the fetus, females of childbearing age should receive vaccine only if they say they are not pregnant and are counseled not to become pregnant for 1 month after vaccination.