

Patient Information Leaflet

Pregnancy and Rubella

**What you need to know about keeping you and your baby
safe during pregnancy**

Produced By: Maternity department

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Results from your recent blood test found that you are not protected against rubella, which is also known as German Measles.

If your test showed that you are not protected against rubella, which is also known as German Measles.

If your test showed that you are not protected against rubella, this could be because:

- You have never had rubella
- You did not have a full course of rubella vaccinations (or an MMR vaccination) as a child
- You had the vaccination but your body did not make antibodies to protect you from rubella, this happens in up to 1 in 20 women after having one dose of the vaccine.

Although the MMR vaccine can protect people against rubella, we don't recommend that you have it while you are pregnant because there is a chance it could harm your baby.

This leaflet provides some general information about rubella – what it is,, how it is caught, and some simple steps you can take while you are pregnant that will reduce the chances of you or your baby catching rubella.

What is rubella?

Rubella is an infection caused by a virus. In most people it is usually mild and may not even be noticed. It causes a short lived rash, swollen glands and a sore throat.

If a woman is more than 20 weeks pregnant when they catch rubella, it is very unlikely that the baby will be affected.

However, rubella can be very serious for unborn babies if the woman is in her first three months of pregnancy. It can damage the baby's sight, hearing, heart and brain – so it is really important you know how to recognise the signs of rubella early on and understand how you can protect you and your baby.

How is rubella spread?

Rubella is almost as infectious as flu and is spread in the same way, through coughs and sneezes. In some cases pregnant women catch rubella from their own, or their friend's children. By following these simple steps you will minimise the likelihood of catching rubella.

How can I protect myself?

Try to avoid physical contact with people who have a rash or an unknown illness.

If you think you have come into contact with someone who has signs of rubella, such as a rash, tell your midwife or doctor straight away.

If you have a rash during pregnancy, contact your midwife or doctor straight away. If they think it could be caused by rubella they may advise you to have blood tests to find out if you do have rubella.

What if I do catch rubella?

If you catch rubella and you are more than 20 weeks pregnant, it is very unlikely that the baby will be affected.

Women who are less than 20 weeks pregnant when they catch rubella will be offered an appointment in a consultant obstetrician clinic to discuss the next steps, including possible risks to your baby.

Can I just have the rubella vaccine instead of MMR?

Single rubella vaccine is no longer manufactured. MMR vaccine is recognised as the best available vaccination against rubella.

- Even if you have had measles and mumps before, having the MMR vaccine is still important.

What happens after the end of my pregnancy?

Your midwife or doctor should offer or arrange for you to have an MMR vaccination (by injection) while you are still in hospital so you are protected in the future.

If the MMR vaccine is not offered to you, ask a member of staff while you are in hospital.

After having this vaccination, most women are protected against rubella for future pregnancies. A 2nd MMR is recommended one month later as this further improves your chance of being protected.

Your GP (general practitioner) can do a blood test to check that the vaccination has worked before you plan another pregnancy. This is particularly important if you have had a blood transfusion or anti-D injection (Anti-D injections are offered to women who are Rhesus negative). For more information please speak to your midwife or doctor.

It is safe to breastfeed your baby after having the MMR vaccination but you should avoid becoming pregnant for a month after having the MMR vaccination.

Where can I get more information?

You can get more information from:

- Antenatal Clinic at St Mary's Hospital – 01983 534342
- Screening midwives – 01983 552358
- Community midwives contacted via 01983 534392
- MMR website – www.mmrthefacts.nhs.uk
- Health Protection Agency website – www.hpa.org.uk

You can get further information on all sorts of health issues through NHS interactive available through Sky TV or online at: <http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/>

For Health advice and out of hours GP service please call the NHS 111 service on: 111

We Value Your Views On Our Service

If you wish to comment on the care which you, your relative or friend has received, we will be pleased to hear from you. Please speak to the person in charge of the ward, clinic or service in the first instance or ask them to contact the Quality Team. If you wish to contact them directly, telephone on 534850.

Alternatively you may prefer to write to:

Chief Executive
Isle Of Wight NHS Trust
St Mary's Hospital
Newport
Isle of Wight
PO30 5TG

All NHS sites are no smoking areas.

If you would like help and advice to stop smoking please call: Freephone 0800 169 0 169 to talk to the NHS Smoking Helpline.

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