

German Measles Fact Sheet

1. **What is German Measles (GM)?** – GM (rubella) is a viral disease characterized by slight fever, acute onset of a maculopapular rash (a flat red area on the skin that is covered with bumps that tend to run together), swollen glands and joint pain/arthritis (especially in adult women). Most cases are mild.

2. **Who gets GM?** - In unvaccinated populations, GM is primarily a childhood disease. Where children are well-immunized, adolescent and adult infections become more evident. It occurs more frequently in winter and spring. Due to high vaccination levels in the United States, this disease is now very uncommon. Each year, fewer than five cases are typically reported in Pennsylvania. However, the disease occurs more frequently in other parts of the world.

3. **How is GM spread?** - GM is spread person to person through the air by nasal or throat secretions of infected individuals. It is contagious but less so than measles and chickenpox.

4. **What are the symptoms of GM?** - GM is a mild illness that may present few or no symptoms. Symptoms may include a rash, slight fever, joint aches, headache, discomfort, runny nose and reddened eyes. The lymph nodes just behind the ears and at the back of the neck may swell causing some soreness and/or pain. The rash, which may be itchy, first appears on the face and progresses from head to foot, lasting about three days. As many as half of all GM cases occur without a rash.

5. **How soon do symptoms appear?** - The incubation period is 14 to 23 days; in most cases, symptoms appear within 16 to 18 days.

6. **When and for how long is a person able to spread GM?** - GM may be transmitted from seven days before to seven days after rash onset.

7. Does past infection with GM make a person immune? - Yes. Immunity acquired after contracting the disease is usually permanent.

8. What is the vaccine for GM? - Children should get two doses of GM vaccine. The first dose of vaccine is given on or after a child's first birthday, and recommended at 12 to 15 months of age when given in combination. The vaccine is often given as a combination vaccine that protects against measles, mumps and GM (MMR) or (MMRV) measles, mumps, rubella and varicella (chickenpox). The second dose of vaccine is recommended at 4 to 6 years of age.

9. What can be the effect of not being immunized against GM? - GM virus infection is dangerous because of its ability to damage an unborn baby. Infection of a pregnant woman may result in a miscarriage, stillbirth or the birth of an infant with abnormalities, which may include deafness, cataracts, heart defects, liver and spleen damage and mental retardation. Congenital GM syndrome occurs among a least 25 percent of infants born to women who have had GM during their first trimester of pregnancy.

10. What can be done to prevent the spread of GM? - Maintaining high levels of immunization in the community is critical to controlling the spread of GM. Control of the spread is needed primarily. Therefore, women of childbearing age should have their immunity determined and receive GM vaccine, prior to becoming pregnant, if needed to prevent the birth defects caused by congenital GM syndrome. The vaccine cannot be given to pregnant women. Also, infected children should not attend school during their contagious period.

11. For more information about German Measles:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/rubella/>

This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician for specific clinical information.

March 26, 2013