

**WASHINGTON OB/GYN ASSOCIATES**  
95 Leonard Avenue  
Building #1, Suite 300  
Washington, PA 15301  
724-225-3640 Phone

**McMURRAY OB/GYN ASSOCIATES**  
2001 Waterdam Plaza  
Suite 201  
McMurray, PA 15317  
724-942-5420 Phone

**WASHINGTON OB/GYN ASSOCIATES**  
**WAYNESBURG**  
343 East Roy Furman Highway  
Suite 104  
Waynesburg, PA 15370  
724-627-7928 Phone

**WASHINGTON OB/GYN ASSOCIATES**  
**MON VALLEY-CHARLEROI**  
1200 McKean Avenue  
Charleroi, PA 15022  
724-483-1340 Phone

[www.WashingtonObGyn.net](http://www.WashingtonObGyn.net)

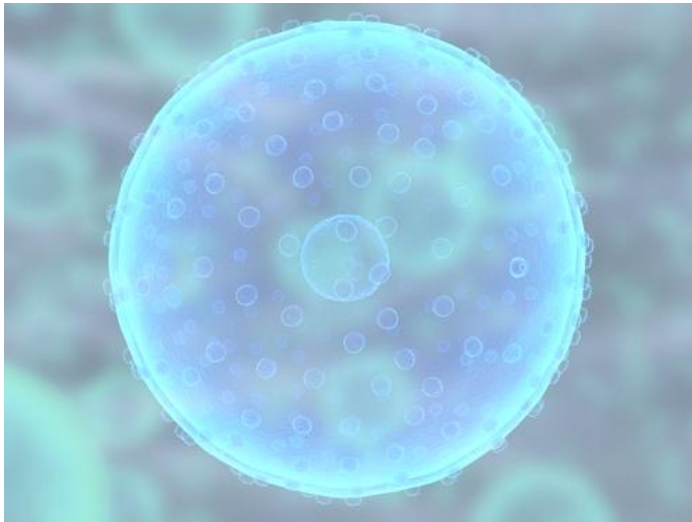
## What is rubella?

Rubella, also called German measles, is a viral infection that a baby can get from the mother before birth. If you have this infection during pregnancy, it can harm the baby. It might also cause a miscarriage. Rubella is sometimes called the three-day measles.

Rubella is most likely to have serious effects on your baby if you are infected during the first 3 months of pregnancy (a 25% risk). However, the baby might also be affected if you have rubella later in the pregnancy (a 1% risk). The baby may develop a group of severe birth defects called rubella syndrome.

## How does it occur?

Rubella is caused by a virus. The virus spread is through the air by coughing or sneezing. Rubella is contagious a few days before symptoms of the illness appear and for 5 to 7 days after symptoms appear. Rubella tends to occur in epidemics in the community.



## What are the symptoms?

Adults may not have any symptoms. When symptoms occur, they appear about 2 to 3 weeks after exposure to the virus and they may include:

- a rash that starts on the chest or face, spreads to other parts of the body, and lasts 3 to 5 days (the most common symptom).
- mild fever
- headache
- tiredness
- joint aches
- tender lymph nodes.

Examples of possible symptoms and problems for babies infected with rubella are:

- deafness
- eye problems (cataracts)
- heart defects
- a small brain or swelling of the brain
- spleen and liver damage
- bone disease
- mental retardation.

Some of these problems may not appear until later in a child's life.

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## **How is it diagnosed?**

When you are sick, your health care provider will ask about your symptoms and examine you. You may have a blood test.

Your health care provider looks for eye, heart, and other problems in the newborn. Samples of fluid from the baby's nose and throat and of the baby's bowel movements and blood may be tested. Other tests may also be done.

## **How is it treated?**

If you are pregnant and have a rubella infection, medicine called hyperimmune globulin may be given to you if you wish to continue the pregnancy. This drug may reduce your symptoms. However, the baby is still at risk of developing rubella syndrome.

There is no specific treatment for newborns infected with rubella.

## **How long will the effects last?**

If you have a rash, it usually goes away in a few days and you recover completely. However, the baby may have lifelong disabilities.

## **What can be done to help prevent rubella?**

Children over 1 year old and women of childbearing age should be vaccinated against rubella. Rubella is included in the MMR shot. Blood tests to determine whether you are immune to rubella should be done before you try to get pregnant. If you are not immune and not pregnant, you can get a rubella shot. You should then wait at least 28 days after the shot before you try to get pregnant.

You may be tested for immunity on your first visit to your health care provider when you are pregnant. If you are immune to rubella, there is no danger of infection. If you are pregnant and not immune to rubella, you cannot be vaccinated until you are no longer pregnant. However, you may be vaccinated while you are breast-feeding.

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