

News Release

For Immediate Release

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Rubella 101

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) encourages residents to get their MMR vaccines on time to protect against rubella. Rubella, also known as German measles or 3-day measles, is now a rare disease in the US since the invention of the rubella vaccine in 1969, but cases are still seen throughout the world. In 1971 the rubella vaccine was added to a combination vaccine that also protects against measles and mumps known as the MMR vaccine.

Symptoms

Rubella is a contagious disease caused by a virus. Signs and symptoms of rubella include a red rash that usually appears on the face and then spreads to the rest of the body. Typically, this rash will last for 3 days (leading to the name 3-day measles). This rash is also usually seen with a low-grade fever, headache, swollen or enlarged lymph nodes, cough, runny nose, general discomfort, and may also have redness or swelling of the whites of the eyes.

Infection

This virus spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes. A person with rubella can spread the disease to other people for up to a week before the rash appears and could still be contagious for up to 7 days. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), some people may not have any symptoms but may still be able to spread this disease to others.

One of the most serious concerns about rubella is if an unvaccinated pregnant woman gets this virus during the first trimester of pregnancy, there can be very serious complications for her unborn child. These complications include miscarriage or still birth, heart problems, liver or spleen damage, loss of hearing and eyesight, and learning disabilities.

“Rubella is a highly contagious vaccine-preventable disease,” states Melissa Propp RN, Clinic Manager with SWNPHD. “The MMR vaccine we use is very safe and effective. One dose of the MMR vaccine is about 97% effective at preventing rubella.”

Prevention

CDC recommends that people get MMR vaccine to protect against measles, mumps, and rubella. Children should get two doses of MMR vaccine, starting with the first dose at 12 to 15 months of age, and the second dose at 4 through 6 years of age. Teens and adults should also make sure to be up to date on their MMR vaccinations, especially if planning on travel to areas outside the US.

If you have questions about rubella, the MMR vaccine, or any other vaccines, contact the public health nurses at SWNPHD. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. You can follow us on Facebook and Instagram or view the website at www.swhealth.ne.gov which contains many resources. Call (308) 345-4223, one number three locations, McCook, Imperial, and Ogallala.