

# Your rubella (German measles) screening test result

What you need to know



Public Health  
Agency

## **Your rubella (German measles) screening test result – What you need to know**

The result of your rubella screening test has shown that you are 'rubella non-immune'.

This means that you could catch rubella if you come into contact with someone who has it.

### **What is rubella?**

Rubella is a viral infection, more commonly known as German measles. Symptoms include:

- a red, spotty rash, which usually starts behind the ears and then spreads to the rest of the body
- swollen glands
- a high temperature
- cold-like symptoms such as a runny nose or cough
- aching or painful joints.

### **How is it spread?**

Rubella infection can be passed on in a similar way to a cold or flu, through droplets of moisture from the nose or mouth of someone who is infected, for example coughing or sneezing.

### **Why is rubella infection serious in pregnancy?**

Rubella infection usually only becomes a serious concern if you catch it in the first 20 weeks of pregnancy. This is because the rubella virus may affect the development of the baby in the womb and can cause a condition known as congenital rubella syndrome (CRS)

CRS can cause a wide range of health problems for the baby including:

- eye problems such as cataracts
- difficulties hearing
- heart abnormalities
- brain damage.

If you are more than 20 weeks pregnant, it is unlikely that rubella will affect your baby.

### **How can I prevent infection?**

If you have ever had two doses of measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccines at least four weeks apart, you should be adequately protected against rubella infection, even if your screening test shows that you are rubella non-immune. However, if you have never been vaccinated with MMR or only ever had one vaccine then you will be offered the MMR vaccine after the birth of your baby.

You can ask at your GP surgery for a printout of your vaccination history.



## What if someone I know has a rash?

It is best to avoid contact with anyone with a rash in pregnancy.

If you are in contact with someone who has a rash, or develop a rash yourself, you should speak to your doctor or midwife as soon as possible, but do not attend a clinic setting unless they advise you to..

## Where will I get my MMR vaccinations?

After the birth of your baby, prior to discharge from hospital, you will be offered your first MMR vaccine.

There are no concerns with taking an extra dose of MMR prior to discharge if you are not sure or 'it is not clear' that you have had two doses previously.

The second MMR vaccine will be offered by your GP after four weeks.

If you have a home birth, your GP will provide your first MMR vaccination after birth.

## Protection for the future

The two doses of the MMR vaccine should give you protection in any future pregnancies.

**You should avoid becoming pregnant for at least four weeks after having the MMR vaccine. If you do become pregnant within this time, speak to your doctor or midwife.**

## Can I have the vaccine during pregnancy?

The MMR vaccine is not recommended for use in pregnancy, so you should wait until after your baby is born.

## **Do I need the vaccine if I do not plan to have any more babies?**

Having the MMR vaccine will protect you from, not only rubella, but measles and mumps infection as well, and will prevent you from spreading these infections to others.

## **What side effects can I expect?**

Some people experience none whilst others may have a mild response to the vaccine around 5–12 days after the injection, including a mild fever, rash or swollen glands.

Other mild reactions that can happen (usually within one or two days of being immunised) include:

- headache
- a slight fever (feeling hot)
- nausea (feeling sick)
- fainting or feeling faint (eating beforehand helps with this)
- generally feeling a bit unwell.

**Reactions are a lot less common after the second dose of MMR**

## **Is the MMR vaccine linked to autism?**

Experts from around the world, including the World Health Organization (WHO), agree that there is no link between the MMR vaccine and autism.

## **Can I get the MMR vaccine while breastfeeding my baby?**

Yes, you can.

## How can I find out more information?

You can discuss any issues or queries you may have at your next appointment with your doctor or midwife.



You can also go to:  
[www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk)

This leaflet is available in other languages here:



**Public Health  
Agency**

### **Public Health Agency**

12-22 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BS.

Tel: 0300 555 0114 (local rate).

[www.publichealth.hscni.net](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net)

Find us on:

