

# Protect your unborn child –

## Check if you're immune to rubella (German measles)

Rubella can cause serious harm to your unborn child. If you are immune (protected) against rubella you can stop your unborn child from being infected.

All women of childbearing age need to know if they are immune (protected) against rubella. You are likely to be immune if you have:

- ▶ already had rubella
- ▶ been immunised against rubella.

**Get your  
rubella  
immunity  
checked  
now**

A simple blood test can let you know if you're protected (immune). Talk to your doctor, nurse, midwife, or community health worker.

### What you need to do

- ▶ If you're **trying to get pregnant**, check with your doctor or midwife now to see if you are protected (immune). If you are not immune you will need to be immunised. Checking if you are immune and getting the vaccine are both free.
- ▶ When you **get immunised**, avoid getting pregnant for at least one month.
- ▶ If you think you **might be pregnant** and your immunity was not tested, talk to your midwife or doctor as soon as you can about what to do. You can't get vaccinated if you're already pregnant.



# What is rubella (German measles)?

Rubella is usually a mild viral illness, which is spread by breathing, coughing, and sneezing. But if a pregnant woman gets rubella, especially in the first three months of pregnancy, it can lead to birth defects in her unborn baby.

## Symptoms of rubella in adults:

- ▶ rash on the face, scalp and body
- ▶ swollen neck glands
- ▶ sore joints
- ▶ feeling unwell.

## For your unborn child, rubella can cause:

- ▶ blindness
- ▶ deafness
- ▶ heart defects
- ▶ brain damage.

## The worst time to get rubella is during the first three months of pregnancy

- ▶ If you are trying to get pregnant or in the early stages of your pregnancy, keep away from children with a rash and adults who have flu-like symptoms, unless you know you are immune from rubella.
- ▶ If you are pregnant and in contact with people who have rubella and you are not sure of your immunity, tell your doctor or midwife immediately, so you can be tested.

**Make sure your children are immunised too. The MMR (measles mumps and rubella) vaccine is available for free for all children at 12 months of age, with the second dose at 15 months of age.**

This resource is available from [www.healthed.govt.nz](http://www.healthed.govt.nz) or the Authorised Provider at your local DHB.

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