

Prevention of Infectious Diseases (Rubella, Chickenpox and Fifth Disease) During Pregnancy

Rubella, Chickenpox and Fifth Disease are viral diseases. They are transmitted primarily through droplets or direct contact with infected respiratory secretions. They can also be transmitted from the mother to foetus during pregnancy.

What you need to know about Rubella, Chickenpox and Fifth Disease

	Incubation Period	Symptoms	Period of Communicability	Effect on the Foetus
Rubella (German Measles)	12-23 days	Presents with diffuse rash, fever, headache, malaise, enlargement of lymph nodes, upper respiratory symptoms and conjunctivitis. The rash usually lasts for about 3 days, but some patients may not have rash at all.	From 1 week before to 1 week after onset of rash.	Whether symptomatic or not, infection during the first 3 months of pregnancy may result in congenital rubella syndrome, e.g. deafness, cataract, heart malformations and mental retardation, etc.
Chickenpox	10-21 days	Presents with fever and itchy skin rashes, rashes develop in crops over a period of 5 days and later as vesicles. The vesicles continue for 3-4 days, then dry up and form scabs.	1-2 days before rash appears and until all vesicles have dried up.	Infection during early pregnancy may be associated with congenital malformation of foetus. If the pregnant woman develops symptoms within 5 days prior to or 2 days after delivery, her baby is more likely to have severe illness which can be fatal.
Fifth Disease	4-20 days	Occurs mostly in children, with low-grade fever and tiredness. A typical facial rash with a "slapped cheek" appearance occurs in a few days. The rash usually resolves in 7-10 days. Symptoms are milder in adults and they may only have mild joint pain and swelling only.	Parvovirus B19 is transmitted primarily through direct contact with infected respiratory secretions.	It can be transmitted from mother to foetus during pregnancy, causing abortion or foetal death.

How to prevent Rubella, Chickenpox and Fifth Disease?

Women are immune from these infections if they have acquired them during childhood or have received relevant vaccinations (e.g. rubella and chickenpox).

Pregnant women who are non-immune should avoid contact with patients diagnosed to have these diseases, and stay away from crowded and under-ventilated public places to minimise the chance of infection.

Women who are non-immune to rubella or chickenpox should consider vaccination after delivery.



What if I suffer from or suspected to have Rubella, Chickenpox or Fifth Disease during pregnancy?

If you have the following conditions:

- Fever or rash
- History of contact with someone suffering from Rubella, Chickenpox, Fifth Disease or other infectious disease in recent 4 weeks
- Suspect that you are suffering from any of these diseases

1. You should attend a general out-patient clinic or a private clinic for management of the disease.
2. **DO NOT** attend obstetric clinic or Maternal & Child Health Centre (MCHC) for enquiry or antenatal check-up until you are considered non-infectious. This is to prevent spreading of the disease to other pregnant women.
3. Please call the obstetric clinic or MCHC you have registered with to make special arrangement for your antenatal check-up.

