

Self-Health Management Precautions for Rubella Contacts

※ What is rubella? What are the symptoms?

Rubella is a highly infectious viral disease that is spread through droplets or direct contact with the patient's nasopharyngeal secretions. Within 14 to 21 days after infection, mild fever, rash, general malaise, rhinitis, conjunctivitis, enlarged lymph nodes behind the ear and neck may occur. Some infected individuals do not develop obvious rash, but only cold-like symptoms. Some infected individuals, especially young women, develop arthritis or joint pain.

※ Who is more vulnerable to rubella?

When a pregnant woman becomes infected with rubella, the virus can be transmitted vertically from the placenta to the fetus, which may result in stillbirth, miscarriage, or fetal defects such as congenital deafness, glaucoma, cataracts, microcephaly, mental retardation, and congenital heart disease, which are collectively known as congenital rubella syndrome (CRS). When pregnant women become infected with rubella during the first 10 weeks of pregnancy, the infants have a 90% chance of developing CRS.

※ What is a rubella contact?

“Contacts” are people who come in close contact with a rubella patient within 7 days before and after the patient develops rash (period of communicability), including family members residing in the same household, classmates, colleagues, healthcare workers where the patient seeks medical attention, and people who have been to the same gathering places with the infectious patient like schools, factories, military camps, and densely populated institutions. As contacts are at risk of contracting rubella, they are thus required to conduct self-health management.

※ How many days do rubella contacts need to conduct self-health management for? What should the contacts do?

Rubella contacts need to conduct self-health management for 21 days starting from the date of the last contact with a rubella case. In addition, rubella contacts are advised to take the following precautions:

1. Avoid contact with pregnant women, infants younger than 1 year of age, young children who have not received the measles mumps rubella vaccine (MMR vaccine), and patients with immunodeficiency.
2. During the self-health management period, contacts can maintain their normal life. However, visits to public places or crowded places should be avoided and masks should be worn as much as possible.

3. Measure the body temperature once a day and watch for the development of any suspected symptoms.
4. If any suspected symptoms occur, please contact the competent health authority as soon as possible for assistance in seeking medical treatment in order to avoid the further spread of the disease.

※ **What additional precautions should pregnant contacts take?**

1. First, she needs to find out whether she has rubella immunity. The first prenatal checkup items for pregnant women include the rubella antibody test. If the test result is positive, it means she has rubella immunity. If she still has not get the test done yet, she can visit a hospital to get a blood test.
2. If she already has immunity to rubella, her chance of infection with rubella is extremely low and there is no cause for concern. However, if she does not have rubella immunity, she needs to inform the doctor at the time of prenatal checkup and asks for evaluation.
3. If no suspected symptoms develop during the period of self-health management, the prenatal checkup and routine inspections shall be carried out on time. If suspected symptoms occur, please inform the doctor.
4. Following childbirth, those who do not have rubella immunity and have not become infected with rubella should bring the negative proof of rubella antibody test to the local health center or contracted immunization clinic to receive one dose of MMR vaccine as soon as possible.