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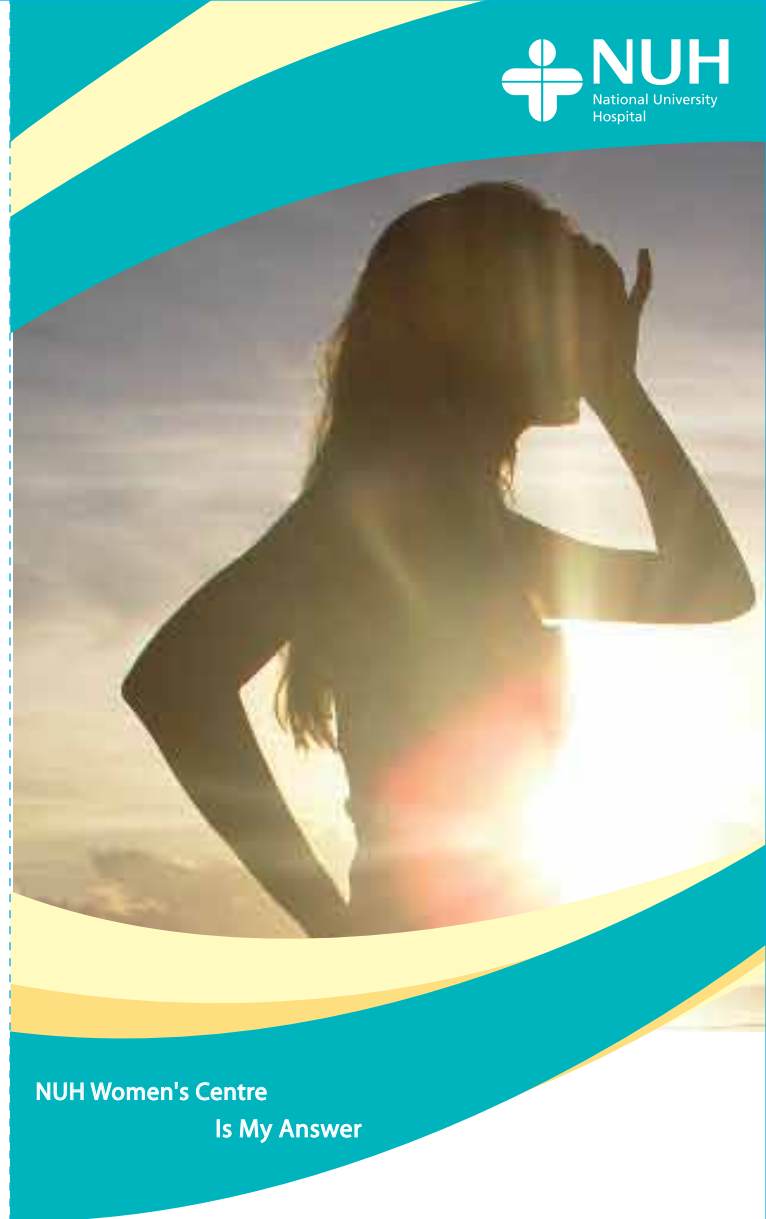


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NUH Women's Centre
 Is My Answer

Get vaccinated against Rubella (German Measles)

In Singapore, the MMR (measles mumps and rubella) vaccine is given to children at 12 months. A second dose is administered between 15 and 18 months of age so that children can be sufficiently protected. Rubella immunisation for 12-year-old schoolgirls started in 1976. Hence, you are likely to have been immunised in school if you are 36 years old or younger.

If you are uncertain whether you have been immunised or infected with rubella before, please consult your family doctor. He/ She may advise for you to be tested for rubella antibodies or to take the rubella vaccination which is safe.

What is rubella?



Rubella, also known as German measles, is caused by a contagious virus. It spreads from person to person when an infected person coughs, sneezes or by direct contact with the nasal or throat secretions of an infected person. A person with rubella can spread the virus to others from a few days before to five - seven days after symptoms appear. It is a mild disease, lasting only three – four days.

It can also be passed from a pregnant woman to her unborn baby. If you are planning to start a family, you are advised to get immunised against rubella. Only one injection is needed which will give nearly 100% protection for all future pregnancies.

Important!

You should not get pregnant for at least three months after immunisation.

If you are pregnant, you must defer immunisation till after delivery of your baby

What are the signs and symptoms of rubella?



Rubella is a very mild disease with very few or no symptoms at all. The rash will develop two – three weeks after being infected with the rubella virus. The rash consists of small pink spots which lasts three – five days, and usually starts on the face and spreads from head to toe.

The other symptoms may include runny nose, fever and headache, red swollen eyes, general tiredness and joint aches. You may also have painful and swollen glands at the back of your neck.

Why is rubella dangerous to the unborn baby?



If a pregnant woman is infected with rubella during the first trimester, her unborn baby has a high chance of being infected. The virus will affect the development of the baby's organs.

This is called the congenital rubella syndrome and includes blindness, mental retardation, deafness and heart defects which may lead to a miscarriage, stillbirth or in the baby being born with severe birth defects. However, defects are rare if the infection occurs after the 20th week of pregnancy.

What if I have had rubella?



If you have had rubella before, you will not get it again. It is sometimes difficult to ascertain if you have had it before. This is because the signs of rubella can be confused with many other illnesses.

It is possible to check your immunity to rubella by a simple blood test. If the blood test results show that you are lacking in the rubella antibody, you should consider getting vaccinated.

Are rubella and measles the same?



Measles is different from rubella. It is always associated with high fever and Koplik's spots (small, white spots, each surrounded by a red ring) which usually appear in the mouth two–three days before the rash appears.

The rash does not fade as quickly and always leaves a temporary brown stain. Having had ordinary measles does not protect you against rubella.

What are the side-effects of the rubella vaccine?



Although vaccines are made from the same infective agents (or parts of them) that cause the disease, they will not make the person sick from the disease. This is because the germs are either killed or weakened. Each new vaccine is tested thoroughly before it is licensed and it is monitored closely for side-effects.

The benefits of immunisation are much greater than the small risk of side-effects. If any at all, the side-effects are usually mild and these include:

- Slight fever, tiredness or poor appetite.
- Pain, redness or swelling at the site of the vaccination.
- A mild rash (that lasts for two days) which may occur five to 12 days after vaccination.