Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention
An Office of the Department of Health and Human Services

Rubella (German Measles)

Definition:
Rubella, or German measles, is caused by the rubella virus.

Signs and symptoms:
Up to 50% of infections may be asymptomatic. In young children, the first sign of rubella is usually a maculopapular rash that begins on the face and progresses from head to foot. The rash lasts about 3 days. Older children and adults may experience a prodrome of 1-5 days with low-grade fever, malaise, swollen glands, and upper respiratory symptoms, followed by the rash. Joint pain is also common in older children and adults. Complications are rare but can include encephalitis, internal bleeding, or orchitis. Exposure to rubella in pregnancy can lead to miscarriage, fetal death, or serious illness due to congenital rubella syndrome.

Transmission:
Rubella is spread through direct contact with respiratory secretions or droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The incubation period is usually 14 days (range 12-23 days). The contagious period is 7 days before rash onset to 7 days after rash onset.

Diagnosis:
Clinical diagnosis can be made based on symptoms and patient history. Confirmatory testing can be performed by serology and by viral culture or polymerase chain reaction (PCR) from a clinical specimen.

Role of the School Nurse:

Prevention:

- Update and maintain vaccine records
- Vaccination with MMR is the best way to prevent rubella infection. 2 doses of MMR vaccine are recommended for all children beginning at 12 months of age. The routine vaccination schedule recommends that the first dose be administered at 12 months and the second dose between 4-6 years. Catch up vaccine can be administered to children who did not start or complete the MMR series; the minimum interval between the 2 doses is 4 weeks. Vaccine is also recommended for adults without evidence of rubella immunity, especially women of childbearing age
- Teach students and staff to cover their noses and mouths when sneezing or coughing
- Promote proper hand washing particularly after using facial tissues or having contact with respiratory secretions to prevent the spread of disease

- Promote routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces and items

Treatment Recommendations:

- There is no specific treatment for rubella.
- Pregnant students or staff exposed to rubella to should notify their Ob/GYN immediately to discuss testing and possible preventive treatment with immune globulin (IG)

Exclusions:

Persons still within the infectious period (7 days before the onset of rash to 7 days after the onset of rash) should be excluded from work, school, daycare, and social activity until 7 days after the onset of rash. Parents and employees should be notified of possible rubella exposures.

Maine Rules (10-144, chapter 261) require that students have two doses of rubella-containing vaccine, laboratory evidence demonstrating immunity, or a reliable documented history of disease provided by a physician or other primary care provider. Philosophical, medical, and religious exemptions are allowed. Susceptible students exposed to rubella and not immunized or otherwise immune to rubella should be excluded from the school for 23 days from the onset of rash from the last identified case or until the child is immunized.

Reporting Requirements:

Rubella is a reportable condition and should be reported immediately to Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821.

Resources:

- Maine CDC website http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc
- Maine Immunization Program website http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/boh/ddc/immunization
- Federal CDC rubella disease website http://www.cdc.gov/rubella