Rubella
Summary

Rubella (German measles) is a viral illness that causes a skin rash and joint pain. A rubella infection is mild for most people, but it can cause death or birth defects in an unborn baby. The rubella vaccine is available in combined vaccines that also contain vaccines against other serious and potentially fatal diseases.

Rubella is a viral illness that causes a skin rash and joint pain. A rubella infection is mild for most people, but it can have catastrophic consequences for an unborn baby. If a pregnant woman contracts rubella, her baby is at risk of severe and permanent birth defects or death. Rubella is sometimes called German measles, but rubella is a different viral disease to measles. Rubella is uncommon in Australia and other countries with widespread immunisation programs. The World Health Organization (WHO) announced in October 2018 that Australia has eliminated rubella. Elimination does not mean eradication. Outbreaks may still occur, so it is important to continue vaccinating children to prevent the spread of infection to pregnant women.

Symptoms of rubella

About half of rubella cases are so mild that there are no symptoms. If symptoms do occur, they usually appear between two and three weeks after infection. Some of the signs and symptoms of rubella may include:

- mild fever
- headache
- runny nose
- sore eyes
- skin rash
- swollen lymph nodes
- joint pain.

Complications of rubella

Rubella is a mild illness compared to measles and most people recover within about three days. Possible complications of rubella include:

- arthralgia – lingering joint pain that may take a month or more to get better
- otitis media – inflammation of the middle ear
- encephalitis – inflammation of the brain, which can be fatal in some cases.

Congenital rubella syndrome

A pregnant woman can spread the rubella infection to her unborn baby. This can have severe consequences such as miscarriage or birth defects known as congenital rubella syndrome (CRS), especially if the mother contracts the disease during the first trimester (first three months) of her pregnancy.

About nine in every 10 unborn babies exposed to rubella during the first 10 weeks of pregnancy will have a major congenital abnormality.

Birth defects associated with CRS include:

- deafness
- blindness
- heart defects
- intellectual disability
- impaired growth
- inflammation of various organs such as the brain, liver or lungs.

If you are pregnant and you suspect you may have been exposed to rubella, see your doctor.

Causes of rubella

Rubella is most commonly spread when someone ingests (swallows) or inhales the cough or sneeze droplets from an infected person. Infants with CRS shed the rubella virus in their nose and throat secretions and in their urine for months or even years.
Symptoms occur usually between 14 to 17 days (and up to 21 days). People infected with rubella are infectious for approximately one week before, and for at least four days after, the onset of the rash.

High-risk groups

As announced by the World Health Organization in October 2018, rubella has been eliminated in Australia, but cases may still occur. Anyone who hasn’t been vaccinated against rubella is at risk, in particular:

- travellers to (and visitors from) areas where rubella vaccination programs aren’t widespread
- childcare workers
- people who work in healthcare settings such as hospitals
- unborn babies whose mothers have low or non-existent rubella immunity.

Diagnosis of rubella

Rubella can be difficult to diagnose because the signs and symptoms are vague and non-specific. For example, many illnesses other than rubella cause fever and the rash looks similar to other types of rashes. Methods used to diagnose rubella may include:

- medical history including immunisation status and travel history
- physical examination
- blood tests.

Treatment for rubella

No specific medical treatment for rubella exists and the symptoms are usually mild. Antibiotics don’t work because the illness is viral. Treatment aims to ease symptoms and reduce the risk of complications. Options may include:

- bed rest
- plenty of fluids
- paracetamol to reduce pain and fever.

It is important to isolate yourself for at least four days following the onset of the rash to reduce the risk of infecting others.

If you are pregnant and you contract rubella, discuss your treatment options with your doctor.

Immunisation against rubella

Immunisation is the best way to prevent rubella. A single rubella infection usually offers lifelong immunity for most people. Although unlikely, it is still possible to contract rubella even if you have had a vaccination or a previous rubella infection.

There are two types of rubella vaccine. In the first type, the rubella vaccine is combined with the measles and mumps vaccines and is commonly known as the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine. In the second type, the rubella vaccine is combined with measles, mumps and varicella (chickenpox) vaccines and is commonly known as MMRV.

Protection against rubella is available under the National Immunisation Program Schedule. In Victoria, immunisation against rubella is free of charge for:

- children at 12 months – the first dose of rubella vaccine is given as the MMR combination vaccine
- children at 18 months of age – the second dose of rubella vaccine is given as the MMRV combination vaccine
- all children under 10 years of age can receive the free National Immunisation Program vaccines
- all young people 10 to 19 years of age
- women planning pregnancy or shortly after delivery – if their blood test shows they have no immunity to rubella
- children up to and including nine years old – catch-up immunisations are available for children who have not been fully vaccinated
- women planning pregnancy or after the birth of their child – two doses of MMR are available for women who have low immunity or no immunity to rubella
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable people – catch-up immunisations are available for people who have not been fully vaccinated
- people born during or since 1966, without evidence of receiving two documented doses of valid MMR vaccine or without a blood test showing evidence of immunity to measles, mumps and rubella, are eligible for one or two doses of MMR vaccine. (If two MMR doses are required they should be given a minimum of 28 days apart.)

If you have not received the vaccine, ask your doctor or immunisation provider about catch-up doses.

Note : The MMRV vaccine is not recommended for people aged 14 years and over. From 14 years of age people require the MMR vaccine and a separate chickenpox vaccine.

Pregnancy and immunisation against rubella

If you are intending to become pregnant, have a blood test to check your immunity against rubella and then have a vaccination if required. This blood test is necessary because even if you have previously been vaccinated against rubella, you may not be immune.

Women who are not immune require two doses of vaccine a minimum of 28 days apart and should avoid pregnancy for at least 28 days after immunisation.

If you are already pregnant, do not receive the MMR or MMRV vaccine. If you are pregnant and not immune, avoid contact with anyone who has rubella. Arrange for an immunisation soon after you have your baby and then avoid another pregnancy for at least 28 days.
People who work with children

If you work with children, remember that you are at an increased risk of catching and passing on infectious diseases. Stay up to date with all necessary vaccinations to protect yourself and the children (and their mothers) with whom you have regular contact. Some diseases cause only a mild illness in adults, but can be very serious for young children. For example, whooping cough (pertussis) can be deadly for young babies.

People who should not be immunised against rubella

Vaccination against rubella is not recommended for some people. A person with an impaired immune system should not be vaccinated.

Some of the possible causes of impaired immunity include:

- infection with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or the presence of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) from an HIV infection
- taking certain medications, such as high-dose corticosteroids
- having immunosuppressive treatment including chemotherapy and radiotherapy
- having some types of cancer, such as Hodgkin’s disease or leukaemia
- having an immune deficiency with extremely low levels of antibodies (hypogammaglobulinaemia, multiple myeloma or chronic lymphoblastic leukaemia).

Where to get help

- In an emergency, always call triple zero (000)
- Emergency department of your nearest hospital
- Your GP (doctor)
- Local government immunisation service
- Maternal and Child Health Line (24 hours) Tel. 13 22 29
- NURSE-ON-CALL, Tel. 1300 60 60 24 – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)
- Immunisation Program, Department of Health and Human Services, Victorian Government Tel. 1300 882 008
- National Immunisation Hotline, Tel. 1800 671 811
- Pharmacist
- Adverse Events Following Immunisation – Clinical Assessment Network (AEFI-CAN) Tel. 1300 882 924 to report an unexpected or serious reactions to vaccination; the line is attended between 9 am and 4 pm and you can leave a message at all other times

References

- Measles, mumps and rubella. Immunisation information, 2016, Department of Health and Human Services, Victorian Government.
- Immunisation schedule Victoria and vaccine eligibiltiy criteria, 2018, Department of Health and Human Services, Victorian Government.
- Vaccine side effects, 2018, Department of Health and Human Services, Victorian Government.
- Pre-immunisation checklist – what to tell your doctor or nurse before immunisation, 2017, Department of Health and Human Services, Victorian Government.

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Please note that we cannot answer personal medical queries. If you are looking for health or medical advice we recommend that you:

- talk to your doctor or pharmacist
- dial triple zero (000) in an emergency
- ring NURSE-ON-CALL Tel. 1300 60 60 24.
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More information

Infections

The following content is displayed as Tabs. Once you have activated a link navigate to the end of the list to view its associated content. The activated link is defined as Active Tab

• Infection explained
• Preventing infections
• Managing infections
• Childhood infections
• Animal to human infections
• A-Z of infectious disorders

Infection explained

• Antibiotic resistant bacteria
  Careful prescribing of antibiotics will minimise the emergence of antibiotic resistant strains of bacteria...

• Beat the Bite
  Beat the Bite is a Victorian government health campaign to highlight awareness of the risk of mosquito-borne diseases in Victoria. Find resources to be printed and shared along with videos that tell...

• Chest infections
  A chest infection affects your lungs, either in the larger airways (bronchitis) or in the smaller air sacs (pneumonia).

• Fever

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A mild fever up to 39°C can actually help the immune system to get rid of an infection...

- **Immunisation history statements for children**

  By law, parents or guardians must provide an Immunisation History Statement when enrolling children in any childcare service, kindergarten or primary school in Victoria...

- **Infection risk - cardiac surgery and mycobacteria**

  Mycobacterium chimaera is a type of bacterium known as a non-tuberculous mycobacterium (NTM). There is a risk that heater cooler units (HCUs) used in cardiac (heart) surgery may be contaminated with...

- **Who provides immunisations in Victoria**

  Immunisations in Victoria are provided by local councils, GPs and specially qualified nurses in medical clinics and community health services, some Maternal and Child Health nurses, travel clinics and...

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**Preventing infections**

- **Antibacterial cleaning products**

  The Western obsession with cleanliness may be partly responsible for the increase in allergic asthma and conditions such as rhinitis...

- **Beat the Bite! Mosquito-borne disease risk and management (video)**

  Dr Finn Romanes, public health doctor at Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services explains the department’s program to monitor and manage the risks associated with Mosquitoes. Learn about the...

- **Food safety while travelling**

  Travelling, eating and drinking go together but unfortunately, traveller's diarrhoea and other food-related illnesses can sometimes come along for the ride...

- **Handwashing - why it's important**

  Washing your hands with soap and warm water can help prevent the spread of infectious diseases...

- **Home tattooing**

  Home tattooing, or getting tattoos overseas, puts you at risk of serious complications that can be debilitating and life-long...

- **Immunisation history statements for children**

  By law, parents or guardians must provide an Immunisation History Statement when enrolling children in any childcare service, kindergarten or primary school in Victoria...

- **Kissing and your health**

  While disease-causing bugs can be transferred during a kiss, most won’t cause disease and the risk of serious disease is very small...

- **Personal hygiene**

  Good personal hygiene is one of the most effective ways to protect ourselves and others from illness...

- **Pets – safe handling of reptiles and tropical fish**

  People in contact with tropical fish and reptiles such as turtles, lizards and snakes may be at risk of infections and illness due to germs (such as bacteria, viruses and parasites) carried on the...

- **Piercings**

  If you want to have your body pierced, choose an experienced, registered practitioner to reduce the risks of infection and scarring...

- **Preventing healthcare associated infection (HAI)**

  There are things you can do to reduce the chance of getting an infection while you are in hospital...

- **Quarantine at home - coping tips**

  You may be asked to quarantine yourself at home if you have developed, or been exposed to, an infectious disease...

- **Tattoos**

  If you want to get a tattoo, choose an experienced, registered practitioner to reduce the risks of infection and scarring...

- **Time to immunise - free vaccines for men who have sex with men**

  Immunisation is one of the best ways you can protect yourself and others from infectious diseases in our community. In partnership with Thorne Harbour Health (formerly Victorian AIDS Council), the...

- **Travel health and safety tips (slideshow)**

  We all love travelling to new and exotic places, but unfortunately illnesses and unforeseen events can ruin the trip of a lifetime. With a little effort, take a few of

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these simple precautions to make...

- **Travel immunisation**
  If you are travelling overseas, check with your doctor well in advance to find out what immunisations you need...

- **Vaccines**
  Vaccines trick the body into building immunity against infectious diseases without causing the actual disease...

- **Who provides immunisations in Victoria**
  Immunisations in Victoria are provided by local councils, GPs and specially qualified nurses in medical clinics and community health services, some Maternal and Child Health nurses, travel clinics and...

- **Workplace safety - infection control**
  The spread of many pathogens in the workplace can be prevented with regular hand washing...

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**Managing infections**

- **Antibiotic resistant bacteria**
  Careful prescribing of antibiotics will minimise the emergence of antibiotic resistant strains of bacteria...

- **Handwashing - why it's important**
  Washing your hands with soap and warm water can help prevent the spread of infectious diseases...

- **Medicines and side effects**
  Complementary medicines can interact with pharmaceutical medicines...

- **Medicines - safety issues**
  Make sure your doctor knows about every medicine you take, including vitamins...

- **Preventing healthcare associated infection (HAI)**
  There are things you can do to reduce the chance of getting an infection while you are in hospital...

- **Quarantine at home - coping tips**
  You may be asked to quarantine yourself at home if you have developed, or been exposed to, an infectious disease...

- **Workplace safety - infection control**
  The spread of many pathogens in the workplace can be prevented with regular hand washing...

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**Childhood infections**

- **Beat the Bite**
  Beat the Bite is a Victorian government health campaign to highlight awareness of the risk of mosquito-borne diseases in Victoria. Find resources to be printed and shared along with videos that tell...

- **Boils**
  Some areas of the body are more susceptible to boils, including the face, throat, armpits, groin and buttocks...

- **Chickenpox**
  Chickenpox is highly contagious, but it is generally mild and gets better without the need for special treatment...

- **Coughing and wheezing in children**
  Coughing and wheezing in babies can be distressing for you and your baby, but in most cases symptoms can be relieved at home...

- **Croup**
  Croup is a viral infection of the throat and windpipe that causes noisy breathing, a hoarse voice and a harsh, barking cough...

- **Diphtheria**
  Diphtheria is a serious bacterial disease that causes severe inflammation of the nose, throat and windpipe...

- **Fever - children**
  Fever is a way in which the body fights infection. A fever is not dangerous and does not always indicate a serious illness...

- **Fever - febrile convulsions**

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A febrile convulsion is a fit that occurs in children when they have a high fever.

- Gastroenteritis in children
  Gastroenteritis or Gastro can be dangerous for very young babies. Gastro is common in young children and spreads easily. Gastro is a bowel infection which causes diarrhoea (runny or watery poo) and...

- Hand, foot and mouth disease
  Good personal hygiene is essential to prevent the spread of hand, foot and mouth disease to others, both for those infected and their carers.

- Impetigo - school sores
  Impetigo, or school sores, is a highly contagious skin infection that commonly affects school-aged children.

- Measles
  Measles can cause serious and sometimes fatal complications, including pneumonia and brain inflammation.

- Measles, mumps, rubella, varicella (chickenpox) - immunisation
  Immunisation is the best protection against measles, mumps, rubella and varicella (chickenpox).

- Melissa's story (video)
  Melissa shares her story of how her baby caught chickenpox at 5 weeks old.

- Meningitis
  Meningitis can cause death and requires urgent medical attention.

- Middle ear infections
  Middle ear infections often happen during or after a child has a cold.

- Mumps
  Mumps is a viral illness that causes fever and swollen salivary glands, and a swollen face.

- Roseola infantum
  Roseola is a mild viral infection with associated fever and rash that affects babies and young children.

- Rubella
  Rubella is a mild illness for most people, but very dangerous for pregnant women and their babies.

- Slapped cheek disease
  Children with slapped cheek do not need to be kept home from school or day care, as cases are only contagious before the onset of the rash.

- Streptococcal infection - group B
  Group B streptococcal bacteria can cause a wide range of illnesses in susceptible people including newborns, the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions such as diabetes or cancer. Out...

- Viral encephalitis
  Viral encephalitis is inflammation of the brain caused by a virus and can cause permanent brain damage.

- Whooping cough
  The major symptom of whooping cough is a severe cough, which is often followed by a 'whooping' sound.

- Whooping cough - a family’s experience (video)
  A family shares their experience when their baby daughter contracted whooping cough (or pertussis).

Animal to human infections

- Anthrax
  Anthrax is a rare but potentially fatal bacterial disease that occasionally infects humans.

- Australian bat lyssavirus (ABLV)
  The simplest form of prevention for lyssavirus is to avoid close contact with bats.

- Barmah Forest virus disease
  Barmah Forest virus (BFV) disease can cause joint inflammation and pain, fatigue and a rash of variable appearance. A full recovery can be expected. Most people recover completely within six months.

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Beat the Bite

Beat the Bite is a Victorian government health campaign to highlight awareness of the risk of mosquito-borne diseases in Victoria. Find resources to be printed and shared along with videos that tell...

Beat the Bite! Mosquito-borne disease risk and management (video)

Dr Finn Romanes, public health doctor at Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services explains the department’s program to monitor and manage the risks associated with Mosquitoes. Learn about the...

Bird flu (avian influenza)
The symptoms of bird flu in humans are similar to those of regular influenza..

Dengue virus disease
Dengue virus disease (dengue fever, or ‘dengue’) is a viral disease transmitted by mosquitoes in many tropical and subtropical parts of the world..

Hendra virus
The best defence against Hendra virus is to avoid contact with an infected horse..

Leptospirosis
Leptospirosis is a disease spread from animals to humans, caused by infection with the bacteria Leptospira..

Malaria
Travellers who visit malarial locations should avoid mosquito bites and take anti-malarial drugs..

Mosquitoes can carry diseases
You can reduce the risk of mosquito bites if you get rid of potential mosquito breeding sites around your home..

Murray Valley encephalitis
The only protection from Murray Valley encephalitis (MVE) is to avoid mosquito bites..

Pets – safe handling of reptiles and tropical fish
People in contact with tropical fish and reptiles such as turtles, lizards and snakes may be at risk of infections and illness due to germs (such as bacteria, viruses and parasites) carried on the...

Pinworms
Despite the unsavoury reputation, a pinworm infection (worms) is relatively harmless and easily treated..

Psittacosis - parrot fever
People who have birds as pets, poultry workers and anyone working in aviaries or pet shops, are most at risk of catching psittacosis..

Q fever
Q fever is caused by a micro-organism that can be carried by cattle, sheep and goats..

Ross River virus disease
Most people recover from Ross River virus disease, although some people have symptoms for a year or more..

Tapeworms and hydatid disease
It's important for your own health to control tapeworm infection in your dog..

Toxoplasmosis
Problems only occur if a woman becomes infected with parasites that cause toxoplasmosis for the first time while pregnant..

West Nile virus
All disease-carrying mosquitoes breed in water or require water to enable eggs to hatch..

Zika virus
Zika virus is a mosquito-borne virus. There is no cure, specific treatment or vaccine for Zika virus..

A-Z of infectious disorders

Anthrax
Anthrax is a rare but potentially fatal bacterial disease that occasionally infects humans..

Asperillus
Aspergillus is a fungus that commonly grows on rotting vegetation. It can cause asthma symptoms.

- Australian bat lyssavirus (AHLV)
  The simplest form of prevention for lyssavirus is to avoid close contact with bats.

- Bacterial vaginosis
  Bacterial vaginosis (BV) is caused by an imbalance of the bacteria normally present in the vagina.

- Barmah Forest virus disease
  Barmah Forest virus (BFV) disease can cause joint inflammation and pain, fatigue and a rash of variable appearance. A full recovery can be expected. Most people recover completely within six months.

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- Beat the Bite mosquitoes - learn how to beat the bite (video)
  Hear from Victoria's Chief Health Officer talk about how you can protect yourself from mosquitoes this season.

- Bird flu (avian influenza)
  The symptoms of bird flu in humans are similar to those of regular influenza.

- Bites and stings – first aid
  If you are bitten or stung by an insect or animal, apply first aid and seek medical treatment as soon as possible.

- Bouts
  Some areas of the body are more susceptible to boils, including the face, throat, armpits, groin and buttocks.

- Botulism
  Botulism is considered a medical emergency. If untreated, it may cause death.

- Buruli ulcer
  Since the ulcer gets bigger with time, early diagnosis and prompt treatment of Bairnsdale disease can keep skin loss to a minimum.

- Candida auris (C. auris)
  Candida is a genus of fungi (yeasts) that live on the skin and inside the human body. Candida auris (also called C. auris) is an uncommon fungus that can cause serious infections.

- Cellulitis
  Cellulitis is a bacterial infection of the skin that occurs most commonly on the lower legs and in areas where the skin is damaged or inflamed.

- Chest infections
  A chest infection affects your lungs, either in the larger airways (bronchitis) or in the smaller air sacs (pneumonia).

- Chickenpox
  Chickenpox is highly contagious, but it is generally mild and gets better without the need for special treatment.

- Chlamydia
  Chlamydia is often called the 'silent infection' because most people do not realise they have it.

- Colds
  Cold viruses are spread by sneezing, coughing and hand contact.

- Cold sores
  Cold sores are blisters around the mouth and nose, caused by the herpes simplex virus.

- Coughing and wheezing in children
  Coughing and wheezing in babies can be distressing for you and your baby, but in most cases symptoms can be relieved at home
- **Croup**
  Croup is a viral infection of the throat and windpipe that causes noisy breathing, a hoarse voice and a harsh, barking cough.

- **Cystitis**
  Cystitis is the most common urinary tract infection in women.

- **Cytomegalovirus (CMV)**
  If an unborn baby gets CMV from their mother, it can cause hearing loss and intellectual disability.

- **Dengue virus disease**
  Dengue virus disease (dengue fever, or ‘dengue’) is a viral disease transmitted by mosquitoes in many tropical and subtropical parts of the world.

- **Diarrhoea**
  Acute diarrhoea in babies and young children can be life threatening.

- **Diphtheria**
  Diphtheria is a serious bacterial disease that causes severe inflammation of the nose, throat and windpipe.

- **Ebola virus disease (EVD)**
  Ebola virus is a rare disease that can cause severe symptoms and can be life-threatening.

- **Epididymitis**
  Epididymitis is an infection that causes inflammation of the epididymis.

- **Eyes - trachoma**
  A clean face and clean environment are the best protection against trachoma.

- **Fatigue fighting tips**
  Activity and nutrition help fight fatigue and put more energy into your daily life.

- **Fever - children**
  Fever is a way in which the body fights infection. A fever is not dangerous and does not always indicate a serious illness.

- **Fever - febrile convulsions**
  A febrile convolution is a fit that occurs in children when they have a high fever.

- **Flu (influenza)**
  Influenza (the flu) is caused by a virus. The flu is more than just a bad cold and can occasionally lead to serious complications, including death. Specific antiviral medication is available. It is...

- **Food poisoning - listeria**
  Listeria infection is uncommon but very dangerous for the elderly, people whose immune systems are not working properly and pregnant women and their unborn babies.

- **Gastroenteritis**
  It is important to establish the cause of gastro, as different types of gastroenteritis respond to different treatments.

- **Gastroenteritis - amoebiasis**
  Amoebiasis can cause diarrhoea among travellers to developing countries.

- **Gastroenteritis - campylobacteriosis**
  Campylobacteriosis is a type of gastroenteritis and is more common in children under five years of age and young adults.

- **Gastroenteritis - cryptosporidiosis**
  Outbreaks of cryptosporidiosis have been associated with child care centres, public swimming pools and contaminated water supplies.

- **Gastroenteritis - giardiasis**
  Most people infected with Giardia parasites do not develop symptoms but can still spread the infection to others.

- **Gastroenteritis in children**
  Gastroenteritis or Gastro can be dangerous for very young babies. Gastro is common in young children and spreads easily. Gastro is a bowel infection which causes diarrhoea (runny or watery poo) and...
• Gastroenteritis - salmonellosis
  You may be more prone to salmonellosis if you are elderly, have another medical condition (such as a weakened immune system) or are malnourished.

• Gastroenteritis - shigella
  Outbreaks of shigella gastroenteritis can occur in institutional settings, particularly where children are still in nappies or adults are incontinent.

• Genital herpes
  Many people with genital herpes are not aware that they have the infection, because they have no symptoms.

• Genital warts
  Genital warts are one of the most common sexually transmissible infections.

• Glandular fever
  Glandular fever is most common among high school and university students, but young children can also become infected by saliva on toys, shared cups, or the hands of carers.

• Gonorrhoea
  Gonorrhoea, also spelt gonorrhea, affects both men and women and is transmitted during sex, it may lead to infertility in women if left untreated.

• Haemolytic uraemic syndrome
  Haemolytic uraemic syndrome (HUS) is a rare condition which can lead to chronic kidney damage or death from kidney failure.

• Hand, foot and mouth disease
  Good personal hygiene is essential to prevent the spread of hand, foot and mouth disease to others, both for those infected and their carers.

• Heart conditions - endocarditis
  Endocarditis is an infection of the heart valves or the inner linings of the heart.

• Hendra virus
  The best defence against Hendra virus is to avoid contact with an infected horse.

• Hepatitis
  Hepatitis is an umbrella term for several diseases that affect the liver.

• Hepatitis A
  Immunisation is the best protection against hepatitis A infection and it is recommended for people in high-risk groups.

• Hepatitis B
  Hepatitis B is a viral infection that affects the liver and can lead to serious illness or death.

• Hepatitis C
  In Australia, hepatitis C is most often spread through the sharing of unsterile drug injecting equipment. New all oral combination treatment has greatly improved health outcomes for people with.

• Hepatitis C Cure - what it means for Victorians (video)
  Hepatitis C Cure - what it means for Victorians.

• HIV
  In Australia, HIV is most commonly spread when having sex without a condom and when sharing needles and other injecting equipment.

• Impetigo - school sores
  Impetigo, or school sores, is a highly contagious skin infection that commonly affects school-aged children.

• Labyrinthitis and vestibular neuritis
  Labyrinthitis and vestibular neuritis are disorders that result in inflammation of the inner ear and the nerve connecting the inner ear to the brain.

• Legionnaires' disease
  Legionnaires' disease is a rare form of pneumonia.

• Leprosy (Hansen’s disease)
  Once a person with leprosy begins treatment they quickly become non-infectious.

• Leptospirosis
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Leptospirosis
Leptospirosis is a disease spread from animals to humans, caused by infection with the bacteria Leptospira.

- **Malaria**
  - Travellers who visit malarial locations should avoid mosquito bites and take anti-malarial drugs.

- **Measles**
  - Measles can cause serious and sometimes fatal complications, including pneumonia and brain inflammation.

- **Meningitis**
  - Meningitis can cause death and requires urgent medical attention.

- **Meningococcal disease**
  - Do not leave young adults alone if they suddenly develop a fever because they may become seriously ill very quickly.

- **Molluscum contagiosum**
  - Molluscum contagiosum can be mistaken for genital warts or pimples, check with your doctor for an accurate diagnosis.

- **Mosquitoes can carry diseases**
  - You can reduce the risk of mosquito bites if you get rid of potential mosquito breeding sites around your home.

- **Mumps**
  - Mumps is a viral illness that causes fever and swollen salivary glands, and a swollen face.

- **Murray Valley encephalitis**
  - The only protection from Murray Valley encephalitis (MVE) is to avoid mosquito bites.

- **New drugs for the treatment of hepatitis C – Frequently Asked Questions for patients**
  - In Australia, hepatitis C is most often spread through the sharing of unsterile drug injecting equipment. New all oral combination treatment has greatly improved health outcomes for people with.

- **Osteomyelitis**
  - Osteomyelitis means an infection of bone which can either be recent or longstanding.

- **Parechovirus**
  - Good personal hygiene is essential to prevent the spread of parechovirus to others, both for those infected and their carers.

- **Pericarditis**
  - Pericarditis symptoms may be similar to those of heart attack and include chest pain and abnormal heart rhythms.

- **Pets – safe handling of reptiles and tropical fish**
  - People in contact with tropical fish and reptiles such as turtles, lizards and snakes may be at risk of infections and illness due to germs (such as bacteria, viruses and parasites) carried on the.

- **Pinworms**
  - Despite the unsavoury reputation, a pinworm infection (worms) is relatively harmless and easily treated.

- **Pleurisy**
  - Treating any infection of the upper respiratory tract quickly will reduce the risk of developing pleurisy.

- **Pneumococcal disease**
  - Pneumococcal disease is a leading cause of serious illness and death in young children.

- **Pneumonia**
  - Anyone can get pneumonia, but young children and the elderly are most susceptible.

- **Polio and post-polio syndrome**
  - Polio is a serious disease that can cause life-threatening paralysis and possibly death.

- **Psittacosis - parrot fever**
People who have birds as pets, poultry workers and anyone working in aviaries or pet shops, are most at risk of catching psittacosis.

- **Q fever**
  Q fever is caused by a micro-organism that can be carried by cattle, sheep and goats.

- **Reactive arthritis**
  Reactive arthritis is a form of arthritis that occurs as a result of some bacterial infections.

- **Rheumatic fever**
  Untreated rheumatic fever can lead to serious complications such as rheumatic heart disease.

- **Roseola infantum**
  Roseola is a mild viral infection with associated fever and rash that affects babies and young children.

- **Ross River virus disease**
  Most people recover from Ross River virus disease, although some people have symptoms for a year or more.

- **Rotavirus**
  Rotavirus is a common cause of viral gastroenteritis for Australian babies and preschool children.

- **Rubella**
  Rubella is a mild illness for most people, but very dangerous for pregnant women and their babies.

- **Salpingitis**
  Salpingitis is one of the most common causes of female infertility and may permanently damage the fallopian tubes.

- **Septicaemia**
  Bacteria in the bowels, urinary tract, mouth and skin can cause disease if they get into the bloodstream.

- **Shiga toxin-producing E.coli**
  There are many types of E.coli bacteria, most of which are harmless. However, some types of E.coli produce toxins (poisons) that can cause gastroenteritis (gastro). One of these types of E.coli is.

- **Shingles**
  Shingles is caused by the same virus responsible for chickenpox.

- **Slapped cheek disease**
  Children with slapped cheek do not need to be kept home from school or day care, as cases are only contagious before the onset of the rash.

- **Smallpox**
  Smallpox was once a feared and highly contagious viral disease.

- **Staphylococcus aureus - golden staph**
  Hospital patients are more likely to be infected by golden staph because of surgical or other wounds.

- **Streptococcal infection - group A**
  Streptococcal infection 7 group A can cause sore throats (pharyngitis), scarlet fever or impetigo (school sores).

- **Streptococcal infection - group B**
  Group B streptococcal bacteria can cause a wide range of illnesses in susceptible people including newborns, the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions such as diabetes or cancer. Out...

- **Styes**
  Styes may be red and sore, but they generally do not cause any damage to the eye or eyelids.

- **Swimmer's ear**
  Swimmer's ear can be triggered by exposure to water or mechanical damage due to overzealous cleaning.

- **Tapeworms and hydatid disease**
  It's important for your own health to control tapeworm infection in your dog.

- **Tetanus**
  Tetanus is a life-threatening disease and immunisation is the best way to reduce your risk.
• Time to immunise - free vaccines for men who have sex with men
Immunisation is one of the best ways you can protect yourself and others from infectious diseases in our community. In partnership with Thorne Harbour Health (formerly Victorian AIDS Council), the...

• Tinea
Tinea is contagious and can be spread by skin-to-skin contact or indirectly through towels, clothes or floors...

• Toxic shock syndrome (TSS)
If you think you could have toxic shock syndrome, stop using tampons immediately and go to the emergency department of your nearest hospital...

• Toxoplasmosis
Problems only occur if a woman becomes infected with parasites that cause toxoplasmosis for the first time while pregnant...

• Travel health - yellow fever immunisation
If you are travelling or passing through areas infected with yellow fever, some countries require you to be vaccinated...

• Tuberculosis (TB)
Tuberculosis is spread when a person with an active infection coughs, laughs, sinus or sneezes...

• Urinary tract infections (UTI)
Urinary tract infections (UTIs) can target the urethra, bladder or kidneys...

• Vaginal thrush
Vaginal thrush is a common infection caused by an overgrowth of yeasts in the vagina...

• Viral encephalitis
Viral encephalitis is inflammation of the brain caused by a virus and can cause permanent brain damage...

• Viral haemorrhagic fever
Viral haemorrhagic fever (VHF) is an extremely infectious and life threatening disease caused by a group of viruses, including the Ebola virus...

• Warts
Warts can be stubborn, so you may need to use more than one type of treatment...

• West Nile virus
All disease-carrying mosquitoes breed in water or require water to enable eggs to hatch...

• Whooping cough
The major symptom of whooping cough is a severe cough, which is often followed by a ‘whooping’ sound...

• Whooping cough – a family’s experience (video)
A family shares their experience when their baby daughter contracted whooping cough (or pertussis)...

• Williams syndrome
Williams syndrome often goes undiagnosed, which means that some people with the disorder fail to get the support and treatment they need until later in life...

• Zika virus
Zika virus is a mosquito-borne virus. There is no cure, specific treatment or vaccine for Zika virus...

Related Information

• Flu (influenza)
Influenza (the flu) is caused by a virus. The flu is more than just a bad cold and can occasionally lead to serious complications, including death. Specific antiviral medication is available. It is...

• Bird flu (avian influenza)
The symptoms of bird flu in humans are similar to those of regular influenza...

• Flu (influenza) – immunisation
Influenza immunisation is recommended for people in known high risk groups...

• Meningitis

betterhealth.vic.gov.au
Meningitis can cause death and requires urgent medical attention...

- **Streptococcal infection – group B**

  Group B streptococcal bacteria can cause a wide range of illnesses in susceptible people including newborns, the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions such as diabetes or cancer. Out...

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**Related information on other websites**

- Department of Health and Ageing, Australian Government - Immunise Australia Program
- Department of Health and Ageing, Australian Government - Measles, mumps, rubella, varicella (MMRV)
- Department of Health, Victorian Government - Check your immunisation HALO
- Department of Health, Victorian Government - Free vaccine Victoria: criteria for eligibility
- Department of Health, Victorian Government - Immunisation
- Department of Health, Victorian Government – Infectious Diseases. In your language
- Department of Health, Victorian Government – Measles, mumps and rubella.

**Content Partner**

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by: Department of Health and Human Services - RHP&R - Health Protection - Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Unit

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Last updated: November 2018

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With tools, information and recommendations tailored to you, it’s your personal and secure health dashboard.

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Medical Dictionary

Enter a search term

Search

Search for your topic using the Merriam Webster medical dictionary

Service Search

Find services near you

Service: Select a service
Location:

Type a minimum of three characters then press UP or DOWN on the keyboard to navigate the autocompleted search results

Eg. Melbourne or 3000

Find a service

Multilingual resources on childhood immunisations

- A reminder for parents about immunisation
- Catch up vaccinations for refugees and asylum seekers in Victoria
- Childhood pneumococcal disease
- Diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (whooping cough) booster vaccine for 18 month old children
- Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, hepatitis B, polio and Hib vaccine for infants
- Immunisations - vaccinations in Victoria
- Measles, mumps, rubella and chickenpox immunisation information
- Measles, mumps and rubella immunisation information
- Meningococcal secondary school vaccine program consent form
- Polio immunisation information
- Rotavirus immunisation information
- Vaccine side effects

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