



PATHOLOGY TESTS EXPLAINED

Information about pathology tests to help everyone take control of their health and make the right decisions about their care.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT **YOUR RUBELLA TEST**

Testing for rubella, also known as German measles, is most often ordered when someone is planning a pregnancy, during pregnancy or after the birth. Most people who are infected by rubella usually have only mild symptoms that improve quickly without any special treatment. However, if a woman is infected by rubella in the first three months of her pregnancy, serious birth defects, miscarriage or stillbirth can result.



The most common rubella symptoms are a low-grade fever, a sore throat and a raised red rash that starts on your face and spreads to the rest of your body. This usually begins 15–17 days after you have come into contact with an infectious person, but it may take as long as three weeks. You are infectious one week before the rash appears and one week after.

The number of new cases of rubella are low in Australia since a combined vaccine for measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) was introduced in 1992. MMR vaccination is recommended for all children.



Blood antibody tests

Blood tests for rubella can show if you have immunity to the virus or not. Antibodies are produced by your immune system to counteract the virus. Testing looks for two types of rubella-specific antibodies.

- IgG antibodies become detectable by day four after the rash appears and reach peak levels within one to two weeks. IgG antibodies can last in your system and give you lifelong immunity.
- IgM antibodies lasts for up to three months after infection.



What can your results tell you?

Result	Interpretation
No antibodies	You have no immunity. Occasionally, low levels of IgM antibodies may be a false positive result.
IgG antibodies are present but no IgM antibodies.	You have had a past infection or vaccination
Presence of IgM antibodies with or without IgG antibodies.	You have had a recent infection. A positive IgM result, particularly in pregnancy, needs to be interpreted with care.
IgM antibodies present in an infant.	The baby was infected during the pregnancy.
If only a low level of antibodies are detected then the test may be inconclusive, and immunisation with the rubella vaccine may be recommended as a precaution.	

Treatment

There is no antibiotic or anti-viral drug that can prevent or cure the infection or reduce the risk of rubella to an unborn baby.

Vaccination

- You should **not** have the rubella vaccine if you are already pregnant.
- You should avoid getting pregnant for one month after having the vaccine.



Questions to ask your doctor

- Why does this test need to be done?
- Do I need to prepare (such as fast or avoid medications) for the sample collection?
- Will an abnormal result mean I need further tests?
- How could it change the course of my care?
- What will happen next, after the test?

For more detailed information on these and many other tests go to pathologytestsexplained.org.au



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www.pathologytestsexplained.org.au

Pathology Tests Explained is the primary national source of consumer information on pathology testing. Information is written and edited by practising pathologists and scientists, including leading experts. This ensures integrity and accuracy.

Pathology Tests Explained is managed by a consortium of medical and scientific organisations representing pathology practice in Australia. More details at:
www.pathologytestsexplained.org.au/about



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My Health Record

You'll find a direct link to the Pathology Tests Explained website embedded in the pathology results pages of your My Health Record.

Click on the link to find information about what your tests are investigating or measuring and what your results can tell your doctor.