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Rubella / German Measles 2009 Case Definition | CDC  
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Rubella / German Measles  
2009 Case Definition  
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NOTE:  
A surveillance case definition is a set of uniform criteria used to define a disease for public health surveillance. Surveillance case definitions enable public health officials to classify and count cases consistently across reporting jurisdictions. Surveillance case definitions are not intended to be used by healthcare providers for making a clinical diagnosis or determining how to meet an individual patient’s health needs.  
Clinical Description  
An illness that has all the following characteristics:  
Acute onset of generalized maculopapular rash  
Temperature greater than 99.0°F (greater than 37.2°C), if measured  
Arthralgia/arthritis, lymphadenopathy, or conjunctivitis  
Laboratory Criteria For Diagnosis  
Isolation of rubella virus from a clinical specimen,  
OR  
Detection of rubella-virus-specific nucleic acid by polymerase chain reaction  
OR  
Significant rise in serum rubella immunoglobulin G antibody level between acute- and convalescent-phase specimens, by any standard serologic assay,  
OR  
Positive serologic test for rubella immunoglobulin M antibody  
Case Classification  
Suspected  
Any generalized rash illness of acute onset  
Probable  
A case that meets the clinical case definition, has no or noncontributory serologic or virologic testing, and is not epidemiologically linked to a laboratory-confirmed case  
Confirmed  
A case that is laboratory confirmed or that meets the clinical case definition and is epidemiologically linked to a laboratory-confirmed case  
Epidemiologic Classification  
Internationally imported case  
: An internationally imported case is defined as a case in which rubella results from exposure to rubella virus outside the United States as evidenced by at least some of the exposure period (12–23 days before rash onset) occurring outside the United States and the onset of rash within 23 days of entering the United States and no known exposure to rubella in the U.S. during that time. All other cases are considered U.S.-acquired cases.  
U.S.-acquired case  
: A U.S.-acquired case is defined as a case in which the patient had not been outside the United States during the 23 days before rash onset or was known to have been exposed to rubella within the United States.  
U.S.-acquired cases are subclassified into four mutually exclusive groups:  
Import-linked case: Any case in a chain of transmission that is epidemiologically linked to an internationally imported case.  
Imported-virus case: a case for which an epidemiologic link to an internationally imported case was not identified but for which viral genetic evidence indicates an imported rubella genotype, i.e., a genotype that is not occurring within the United States in a pattern indicative of endemic transmission. An endemic genotype is the genotype of any rubella virus that occurs in an endemic chain of transmission (i.e., lasting ≥12 months). Any genotype that is found repeatedly in U.S.-acquired cases should be thoroughly investigated as a potential endemic genotype, especially if the cases are closely related in time or location.  
Endemic case: a case for which epidemiological or virological evidence indicates an endemic chain of transmission. Endemic transmission is defined as a chain of rubella virus transmission continuous for ≥12 months within the United States.  
Unknown source case: a case for which an epidemiological or virological link to importation or to endemic transmission within the U.S. cannot be established after a thorough investigation. These cases must be carefully assessed epidemiologically to assure that they do not represent a sustained U.S.-acquired chain of transmission or an endemic chain of transmission within the U.S.  
Note: Internationally imported, import-linked, and imported-virus cases are considered collectively to be import-associated cases.  
States may also choose to classify cases as "out-of-state-imported" when imported from another state in the United States. For national reporting, however, cases will be classified as either internationally imported or U.S.-acquired.  
Comments  
Serum rubella IgM test results that are false positives have been reported in persons with other viral infections (e.g., acute infection with Epstein-Barr virus [infectious mononucleosis], recent cytomegalovirus infection, and parvovirus infection) or in the presence of rheumatoid factor. Patients who have laboratory evidence of recent measles infection are excluded.  
Related Case Definition(s)  
Rubella / German Measles | 2025 Case Definition  
Rubella / German Measles | 2013 Case Definition  
Rubella / German Measles | 2010 Case Definition  
Rubella / German Measles | 2007 Case Definition  
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