

Cessation of screening for rubella susceptibility in pregnancy

1 June 2016



What is Rubella?

- Rubella (German measles) is a viral infection that used to be common in children. Symptoms include:
 - a red-pink skin rash of small spots
 - swollen glands around the head and neck
 - fever and cold and flu-like symptoms
- Rubella gets better without treatment in 7 to 10 days and is usually a mild infection.
- However, if a woman gets rubella in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, her baby has a 9 in 10 chance of problems that include heart defects, cataracts and deafness.
- The risk is much lower if infection occurs later in pregnancy



Why are we stopping screening?

- The decision follows reviews of evidence by the UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) in 2003 and 2012.
- On both occasions it found that screening for rubella susceptibility in pregnancy did not meet the criteria for a screening programme.
 - Screening test result does not address risk in current pregnancy
 - Low-level antibodies detected at screening are probably protective
 - the test may falsely reassure women that they are not susceptible to rubella infection in the current pregnancy
 - MMR uptake rates are high again



Key Points

- High MMR uptake in children is primary mechanism for preventing rubella infection in pregnancy, by preventing circulation of infection
- Rubella has been virtually eliminated from the UK
- Few cases of rubella infection in pregnancy, or congenital rubella in recent years
- Antenatal rubella screening was for susceptibility only to identify those needing MMR post-partum.
- Ensuring protection prior to pregnancy is preferable



Investigation of possible Rubella in pregnancy

- Individual pregnant women with specific signs, symptoms or rubella contact require investigative or diagnostic testing
- Screening test is not appropriate or helpful in these circumstances
- No effective treatment to prevent transmission of maternal rubella to the fetus





The practicalities of cessation

- The offer of antenatal screening should stop for all women in Scotland booking on or after 1 June 2016
- Screening for HIV, hepatitis B and syphilis should continue to be offered and recommended to all eligible women
- The rubella screening pathway should be completed for women booking and accepting screening before 1 June, meaning:
 - ➤ Laboratories will test decreasing numbers of samples over summer 2016 and will need to adjust assay supplies accordingly
 - Continued reporting and follow-up of results for women booking into this cohort by screening teams
 - ➤ Continued administration of postnatal MMR by maternity services and referral to primary care for second vaccination for non-immune women in this booking cohort



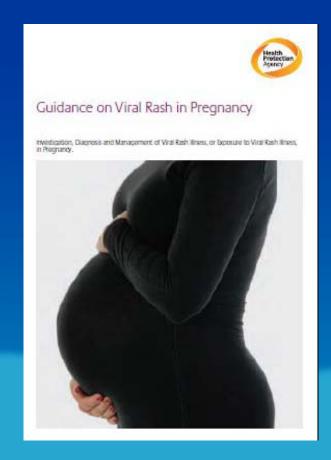
Other considerations

- Discuss immunisations in pregnancy at booking
- Advise women to check their MMR status with their GP practice
- Highlight to the woman the importance of reporting rash illness or contact with rash illness during their pregnancy to their midwife or GP
- Postnatally signpost women to their GP to check their MMR status and if required be offered postnatal vaccination
- Reassure women that the MMR vaccine can be given to breastfeeding mothers without any risk to their baby



Rash Awareness

- Need for health professionals and women to be aware of rare but continuing risk of rubella in pregnancy, particularly for women born or who have lived outwith the UK who may not have been immunised
- Improve awareness of rash illness in pregnancy, and appropriate management. Health Protection Agency guidance





Supporting resources

- Updated protocols
- Updated "Your guide to screening tests during pregnancy
- Updated Ready Steady Baby
- Updated Screening pathway

Important changes to the pregnancy screening programme

NHS

Use updated versions of Your guide to screening tests during pregnancy and Ready Steady Baby

for women booking on or after 1 June 2016

- From 1 June 2016, the NHS in Scotland will no longer offer screening during pregnancy for rubella (German measles) susceptibility.
- Please use the updated versions of these booklets for all women booking pregnancies from 1 June 2016 onwards. Look out for 2016 on the cover of Your guide to screening tests during pregnancy and check page 36 of Ready Steady Baby has a sticker covering the out-of-date information.
- Please return any out-of-date booklets to your local health promotion department (contact details overleaf).

For further copies of the updated publications, please contact your local health promotion department (contact details overleaf).



Steady