Rubella

Rubella is a Class A Disease and must be reported to the state within 24 hours by calling the phone number listed on the website.

Rubella is a mild, fever causing, viral disease caused by the rubella virus. While it may only cause mild illness in healthy individuals, the disease poses a significant health risk to pregnant women and developing fetus. Rubella during pregnancy can result in stillbirths or produce anomalies in the developing fetus including deafness, cataracts, heart defects, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and liver and spleen damage. These problems in a newborn are often collectively referred to as congenital rubella syndrome (CRS).

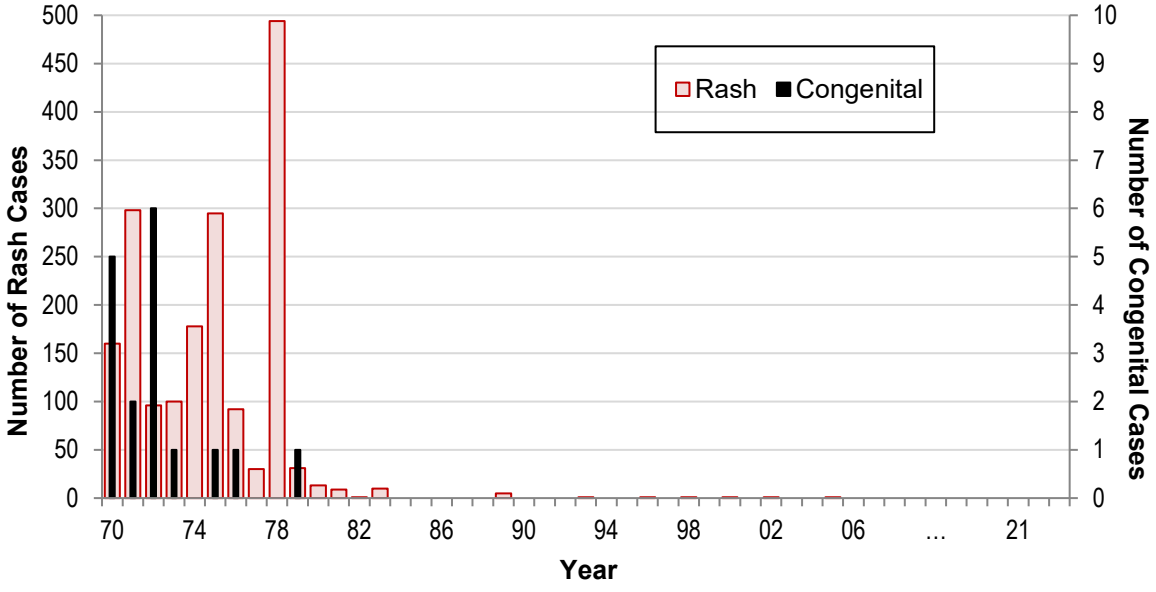
Rubella is transmitted by contact with an infected person, through coughing and sneezing. The typically order of infection follows a cyclical pattern, with small outbreaks occurring every two to three years and larger epidemics every six to nine years. The exact cause of these major epidemics remains unknown.

Rubella was eliminated from the United States in 2004. Elimination is defined as the absence of continuous disease transmission for 12 months or more in a specific geographic area. Rubella is no longer constantly present in the United States, but it remains a concern in other parts of the world. People infected abroad can still bring the virus into the U.S., posing a risk of outbreaks.

Rubella Historical and Current Cases

The rubella vaccine was first licensed in the U.S. in 1969. Due to widespread vaccination, the number of new cases of both rash and CRS in Louisiana decreased sharply by 1979 (Figure 1). Since 1990, there have been between zero and one rash cases and no cases of congenital rubella reported each year

Figure 1: Rubella cases - Louisiana, 1970-2023



Elimination of Rubella and Congenital Rubella Syndrome in the U.S.

Since rubella vaccine licensure in 1969, substantial declines in rubella and CRS have occurred. The absence of endemic transmission in the United States is supported by recent data:

1. Less than 10 cases of rubella are reported each year in the United States
2. Since 2012, all cases reported recent residency or travel outside of the U.S.
3. Greater than 90.8% vaccination coverage among 24 month old children and 91.9% in for school age children in 2018(CDC)
4. An estimated 91% population immunity
5. Adequate surveillance to detect rubella outbreaks
6. Pattern of virus genotypes consistent with virus originating in other parts of the world

Given the available data, it is concluded that rubella is no longer endemic in the United States.