

## Rubella

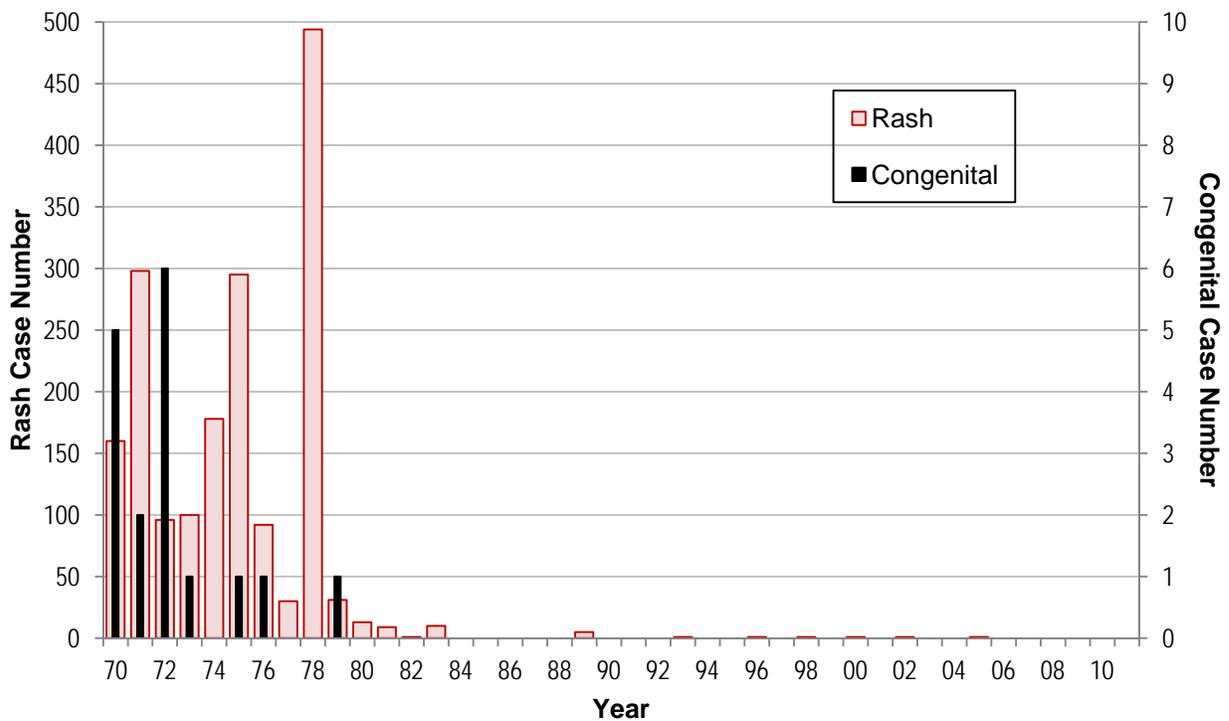
*Rubella is a Class A Disease and must be reported to the state within 24 hours by calling the phone number listed on the website.*

Rubella (German measles) is a mild, febrile viral disease caused by the Rubella virus. It is important because of its ability to produce anomalies in a developing fetus, including deafness, cataracts, heart defects, mental retardation, and liver and spleen damage.

Rubella is transmitted by contact with an infected person, through coughing and sneezing. The typical rubella pattern is the occurrence of small epidemics arising every two to three years, with larger epidemics every six to nine years. The reason for these major epidemics has not been determined.

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

Figure 1: Rubella cases - Louisiana, 1970-2011



In the 1990's, there were changes in the epidemiology of rubella including shifts in the age distribution, ethnicity, country of origin of patients and the setting of outbreaks. Before the 1990's, most rubella cases occurred among persons less than 15 years of age. Since the mid-1990's, persons greater than or equal to 15 years of age, have accounted for most reported cases.

### **Elimination of Rubella and Congenital Rubella Syndrome - USA, 1969-2011**

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) fewer than 25 reported rubella cases each year since 2001 (ten cases were reported in 2006)
- 2) greater than 95% vaccination coverage among school-aged children
- 3) an estimated 91% population immunity
- 4) adequate surveillance to detect rubella outbreaks
- 5) a 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. Since 2000, only three cases of rubella have been reported in Louisiana.