

"Immunize Young Men to Win the Fight Against Rubella, Say Researchers"

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Heath Kelly, Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory head of epidemiology, says that a program to vaccinate Australian men between the ages of 17 to 44 against rubella, or German measles, might be necessary to eradicate the disease in the country. Last year, two babies were born infected and damaged by the virus, the first cases in Australia since 1997. An analysis of about 1,000 blood samples at the laboratory found that 10 percent of men were vulnerable to rubella, as compared to 2 percent of women. The discrepancy is likely the result of past inoculation programs in which teenage girls were given immunizations to prevent birth defects that occur in up to 80 percent of babies whose mothers contract the virus in early pregnancy. A failure to vaccinate males, according to Kelly, poses a risk to pregnant women who are not fully immune to the disease, either because they have not been vaccinated or because their bodies have not developed an immune response. Inoculating males between the ages of 17 and 44 would cover those too young to have become immune due to infection from the disease when it was common during childhood and too old to have been immunized under the current policy of vaccinating all infants against rubella. ([Web Link](#))