

MUMPS

What is mumps?

Mumps is a viral illness that causes swelling in the glands around the cheeks and the jaws. Mumps is caused by the *paramyxovirus* and is now a rare infection.

Mumps was very common in infants, children and young adults before a vaccine became available in Canada in 1969 to prevent measles, mumps and rubella. Most people born between 1970 and 1992 have received one dose of the mumps vaccine in the form of a trivalent mumps, measles, rubella (MMR) vaccine.

If a person has swelling of the salivary glands, it may be caused by other bacteria, viruses or a blockage. Any person who is suspected of having mumps and has swelling of the neck lasting two days or more should complete laboratory testing. Mumps infection can be confirmed by a simple blood test for mumps antibodies. Your physician may contact public health to arrange for laboratory testing to rule out mumps infection and prevent an outbreak.

Mumps can affect any person of any age who has not had the disease or been immunized against it. In severe cases mumps can cause complications such as:

- Meningitis (inflammation of the lining covering the brain and spinal cord with headache or a stiff neck)
- Encephalitis (inflammation of the brain)
- Orchitis (inflammation and swelling of the testicles in males, which in some cases can result in sterility)
- Oophoritis (inflammation and swelling of the ovaries and/or the mammary glands of the breast in females)
- Pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas)
- Hearing loss/deafness (one-sided and usually permanent)
- Miscarriage, if infection happens in the first trimester of pregnancy

What are the symptoms of mumps?

Symptoms of mumps may appear within 12 to 25 days after exposure to the virus, and may include:

- Painful swelling of one or both salivary glands (located within your cheek, near your jaw line, below your ears) called parotitis
- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches and pains
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Respiratory symptoms similar to a cold may also occur in children under five years of age

How does mumps spread?

Mumps spreads easily from person to person. People with mumps carry the virus in their respiratory secretions – their saliva and the droplets from their nose and throat.

When they talk, cough or sneeze, the droplets spread and can enter the mouth and nose of other people, causing new infections. Mumps can

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also be spread through sharing food or drink, kissing, or from contact with any surface that has been contaminated with droplets containing the mumps virus.

A person with mumps is contagious from seven days before to five days after the swelling or other symptoms (if there is no swelling) appears.

How do you prevent mumps?

To avoid getting the mumps, make sure you are adequately vaccinated. Two doses of MMR vaccine are recommended, normally given at 12 months of age and between four and six years of age. If you were born between 1970 and 1992, you may have only received one dose of MMR vaccine and should receive a second dose.

Mumps vaccine effectiveness has been estimated at 76% to 95% for those fully immunized with two doses. Most people will have no side effects from the vaccine; however, mild redness, swelling and pain at the injection site may occur. MMR vaccine can cause a rash and/or fever in some people five to 12 days after the needle is given. This may last for a few days. Allergic reactions to the MMR vaccine and other serious reactions are very rare.

The vaccine is not recommended for anyone who:

- Has had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of this vaccine
- Has an allergy to any part of the vaccine including neomycin or porcine gelatin*
- Has a weak immune system due to disease or medication
- Is pregnant
- Has received immune globulin or blood transfusions in the past three months
- Has received a live vaccine in the previous month
- Has documented proof of previous infection with measles, mumps and rubella
- Is certain they have previously been vaccinated with two doses of MMR

*This vaccine is approved for use in members of religious groups who oppose the ingestion of pig products.

<https://www.vaccinesafety.edu/religion-and-vaccines/>

Note: Women should consult with their doctor before receiving the MMR vaccine if they are trying to become pregnant. Contact your doctor if you discover you are pregnant after getting vaccinated with MMR vaccine.

To avoid spreading the illness to others, a person with mumps should:

- Stay home
- Stay away from infants less than one year of age and other people who are not immune
- Wash hands well and often
- Avoid sharing eating utensils and other personal items.

Objects and surfaces that are frequently touched by the sick person should be cleaned often.

What is the treatment for mumps?

There is no specific treatment for mumps. The focus is on symptom management using over the counter medications such as acetaminophen and/ or using hot or cold compresses.