FACT SHEET: Mumps

May 2025

WHAT IS MUMPS?

Mumps is a contagious disease caused by the mumps virus called paramyxovirus. It is uncommon in children with up-to-date immunization.

WHO CAN GET MUMPS?

Anyone not immune to the mumps is susceptible to contracting the illness. Certain groups of people are more likely to spread disease since they are always near one another. Children in school, university students, and medical professionals are among them.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF MUMPS?

The symptoms start with a few days of fever, headache, malaise, and loss of appetite, followed by parotitis (the swelling of one or more of the salivary glands, typically the parotid glands located in front of and below each ear). Parotitis may first be noted as earache and tenderness on palpation of the angle of the jawbone. Complications of mumps include orchitis (inflammation of one or both testicles), oophoritis (inflammation of one or both ovaries), mastitis (infection of the breast tissue), pancreatitis, hearing loss, meningitis, and encephalitis (inflammation of the brain).

HOW SOON DO SYMTPTOMS APPEAR?

Symptoms usually begin 16–18 days after infection but can range from 12–25 days after exposure.

HOW IS MUMPS SPREAD?

Mumps virus spreads from person to person through direct contact with saliva or respiratory droplets of a person infected with mumps.

IS A PERSON WITH MUMPS CONTAGIOUS?

Patients are contagious from 1 to 2 days before the onset of parotid swelling until 5 days after the onset of swelling. Mumps virus has been isolated from saliva up to 7 days before the onset of parotid swelling through 9 days after the onset of swelling. It has also been detected in urine and semen for up to 14 days.

HOW IS MUMPS TREATED?

There is no specific treatment for the virus. Treatment is supportive and based on the patient's clinical condition.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO REDUCE THE SPREAD OF MUMPS?

You can do the following to prevent the virus from spreading:

1. wash your hands frequently with soap and water, scrubbing your hands for at least 20 seconds
2. cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze
3. avoid close contact with sick people, such as kissing, or sharing cups or eating utensils
4. clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as toys, doorknobs, tables, and counters.

SHOULD A PERSON WITH MUMPS STAY HOME FROM WORK OR SCHOOL?

A person with mumps should avoid contact with others from the time of diagnosis until 5 days after the onset of parotitis. They should stay home from work or school and stay in a separate room if possible.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE IF A PERSON IS EXPOSED TO MUMPS?

Receiving the vaccine after exposure to the virus will not help prevent disease. However, if they do not become infected after this particular exposure, getting vaccinated is the best way to protect against future infection with mumps.

IS THERE A VACCINE FOR MUMPS?

Yes. Vaccination is the most effective way to protect against mumps. Mumps can occur in fully vaccinated persons, but vaccinated persons are at much lower risk of mumps disease and complications. The mumps vaccine is available as the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine (MMR [MMR-II]) and the measles, mumps, rubella, varicella vaccine (MMRV [ProQuad]). Two-dose series, the first dose is typically given at 12-15 months of age, and the second dose is given at 4-6 years of age, MMR or MMRV may be administered. Unvaccinated children and adolescents: 2-dose series at least 4 weeks apart.

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

Information about mumps and other related health topics can be found at cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please visit dchealth.dc.gov or call (202) 442-5865.

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