

Mumps



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CAUSE:

Mumps is an infection of the salivary glands and is caused by a virus.

SYMPTOMS:

How will it affect you?

Symptoms can include swelling of one or more of the salivary glands, high fever and headache. The most common gland affected is the parotid gland which causes swelling at the angle of the jaw in front of the ear. About 30% of people with mumps will have only mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. In males, tenderness of the testicles may occur. Females may have some lower abdominal pain.

Is it serious?

Complications can occur, including inflammation of the brain, spinal cord and pancreas; hearing loss; sterility; or death (extremely rare).

How long will it last?

Salivary gland swelling, if present, progresses to a maximum size over a period of two to three days. This symptom, and associated pain, tenderness and fever, disappear rapidly after this time. The salivary glands return to normal size within a week.

OCCURRENCE:

How common is it?

There has been a decline in the number of cases of mumps since the introduction of an effective vaccine. Vaccination reduced the number of reported cases of

mumps by 98% between 1967 (when the vaccine was introduced) and 1985.

How likely are you to be affected?

Mumps usually occurs in school-age children. In people who are vaccinated, more than 95% will develop immunity which is long-lasting and may be lifelong.

NATURAL HISTORY:

How is it spread?

It is spread by direct contact with droplets from the sneeze or cough of an infected person.

How long does it take to get sick from when you catch the infection?

It can take anywhere between 12 and 25 days to get sick, most commonly 18 days.

How long is it infectious?

Mumps is infectious from six to seven days before the swelling of the glands begins and up to nine days after the onset of swelling. The most infectious period occurs about 48 hours before the onset of illness. Urine can be infectious up to 14 days after the illness begins.

TREATMENT:

What treatment is available?

Paracetamol will reduce the fever and pain. Fluids should be encouraged as eating may be limited by pain.

PREVENTION:**What can be done to prevent the disease?**

Mumps can be prevented by vaccination, which is most commonly given with the measles and rubella vaccinations (MMR) at 12 months of age, and again at four to five years of age.

Who should not be given the vaccine?

- pregnant women
- immunosuppressed persons
- persons allergic to eggs or those who have neomycin sensitivity should not be vaccinated, except under close medical supervision. There is now considerable evidence that children with anaphylactic egg allergy can safely be given MMR vaccine provided this is done under close observation with adrenalin available.

Are there any side-effects?

Five to 12 days following vaccination with MMR, individuals may experience tiredness, fever, cough and/or a rash. Children who develop this rash are not infectious to others. Very rarely (less than one in a million doses) inflammation of the brain has been reported. Swelling of the facial glands may occur about three weeks following the vaccination, due to the mumps component of the vaccine.

People who are allergic to eggs must notify their doctor prior to vaccination. In these cases the vaccine should be given under supervised conditions.

If you are worried about or suspect a serious reaction to the vaccination contact your local doctor or hospital immediately.

How can the spread of disease be controlled?

Persons with mumps should be excluded from work, school, or child care until nine days after the onset of swelling or until the swelling disappears (whichever is sooner).

Unvaccinated persons should be excluded from school, child care or workplaces for 12 to 25 days after exposure to the virus for their own protection, but this is not mandatory.

INFORMATION SOURCE:

Benenson, A.S., ed. Control of Communicable Diseases Manual, 16th edition. Washington, DC: American Public Health Association, 1995:315-317.

Queensland Health Guidelines on Notifiable Disease 1995.

For more information, contact your local public health network

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For medical advice, contact your doctor, hospital or health clinic.

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