

What is mumps?

Mumps is an infection caused by the mumps virus that can result in swelling with tenderness of the salivary glands (the cheek and jaw area) along with fever.

What are the symptoms of mumps?

Swelling may occur on one or both sides of the face, usually the parotid gland (located just below the front of the ear). Other symptoms include headache, general aches and muscle pains. About half of children ages five and under who have mumps may have other respiratory symptoms. Approximately one-third of infected people do not experience symptoms.

What complications have been associated with mumps?

Swelling of the testicles (orchitis) occurs in 20 to 30 percent of males if infection occurs after puberty. Sterility is rare. About one of every ten children who have mumps also gets meningitis (an inflammation of the covering of the brain and spinal cord). Mumps can rarely cause inflammation of the brain itself, known as encephalitis. Mumps infection during the first three months of pregnancy may be linked to miscarriage. Mumps rarely results in death.

Who can get mumps?

Mumps can affect any person of any age who has not had the disease or been immunized against it. Mumps is more common among infants, children and young adults.

How is mumps spread?

The virus is in the saliva and discharges from the nose and throat of infected individuals. It is spread from person-to-person by coughing, sneezing, or by direct contact with these fluids.

When is a person able to spread mumps?

The maximum time a person can transmit the mumps virus is two days before through four days after symptoms begin.

How soon after infection do symptoms occur?

Most people start to show signs of mumps within 14 to 25 days after they are exposed, but usually within 16 to 18 days.

Is there a treatment for mumps?

There is no specific treatment for mumps. Supportive care should be given as indicated by a healthcare provider.

Does past infection with mumps make a person immune?

Yes. Immunity acquired after having the disease is usually permanent, even if the swelling only occurred on one side of the face.

Is there a vaccine for mumps?

Yes. Mumps vaccine is given on or after a child's first birthday, and is usually administered as the MMR or measles, mumps and rubella vaccine. A second dose is recommended at four to six years of age. The vaccine is highly effective and usually produces lifelong protection. In the United States, those born before 1957 are considered immune as they were probably exposed during childhood. People born since 1957 should check their vaccination history and consult their health care provider to see if they have received two doses as recommended. Many foreign countries do not routinely advise or require mumps vaccination.

What can be done to prevent the spread of mumps?

Persons who may have been exposed should have their immunization status evaluated, educated on the signs and symptoms of mumps disease, and should seek medical attention as soon as symptoms suggestive of mumps begin. The single most effective control measure is maintaining the highest possible level of immunization in the community. Persons with mumps should stay home from child care, school, or work to prevent person-to-person spread for a total of five days beginning on the first day of illness onset and lasting until the sixth day after the symptoms begin.

OSDH 09/08

