



# Mumps

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### **What is mumps?**

Mumps is an acute infectious viral disease that can cause swelling and tenderness of the salivary glands in the cheeks and jaw.

### **Who gets mumps?**

Mumps can affect any person of any age who has not had the disease or been vaccinated against it. Mumps usually occurs in children, although older people may contract the disease. The greatest risk of infection occurs among older children. Mumps is more common during winter and spring. Mumps can occasionally occur in persons who have been appropriately vaccinated.

### **How is mumps spread?**

The virus is spread from person to person by coughing and sneezing and by direct contact with saliva and discharges from the nose and throat of infected individuals. Individuals can also be infected through contact with surfaces that have been contaminated with the virus. Mumps is contagious two days prior to and five days after the onset of symptoms.

### **What are the symptoms of mumps?**

Symptoms of mumps usually appear 14 days to 18 days, but sometimes up to 25 days after exposure. Symptoms include fever, headache, and swelling and tenderness of one or more of the salivary glands, usually the parotid gland (located just below the front of the ear at the angle of the jaw). In mild cases the swelling may only last for three days to four days, but it may go on up to a week or more. Approximately one-third of infected people do not exhibit symptoms.

### **What is the treatment for mumps?**

There is no specific treatment for mumps. Analgesics and regular rinsing of the mouth are recommended to relieve symptoms.

### **What complications have been associated with mumps?**

Most complications are rare but may arise and involve other organs. Mumps can cause pain and swelling of the testicles, deafness and arthritis. It can cause central nervous system disorders such as encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) and meningitis (inflammation of the covering of the brain and spinal column). Other complications include inflammation of the pancreas and breasts.

### **How can mumps be prevented?**

One dose of mumps vaccine, given in combination with measles and rubella (called MMR), is recommended for all children at 12 to 15 months and a second dose at 4 to 6 years of age. The vaccine usually produces life-long immunity.

In addition, persons who are ill with mumps should limit their contact with others in the community for up to five days after their onset of symptoms when they are most likely to easily transmit the virus to others through their saliva.

Practicing good personal hygiene, e.g., proper hand washing, disposal of used tissues, and not sharing eating or drinking utensils can also help.

### **Does past infection with mumps make a person immune?**

Yes. Immunity acquired after contracting the disease is usually life-long.

### **Is vaccination for mumps required for attendance in day care and schools?**

Yes, children 2 years of age and older entering a kindergarten through 12th grade or a child care facility, a school operated program below the kindergarten level or a Head Start center in Illinois are required to show proof of immunity to mumps. Immunity can be documented by date of vaccinations, date of disease as verified by a health care provider, or laboratory evidence of mumps immunity (detectable IgG antibody).

### **Do outbreaks of mumps occur?**

Recently, in the U.S. outbreaks of mumps have occurred most commonly on college or university campuses.