

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

MUMPS DISEASE

What is mumps?

It is an infection caused by the mumps virus.

Who can get mumps?

Anyone who is not immune from either previous mumps infection or from vaccination can get mumps. Before the routine vaccination program was introduced in the United States, mumps was a common illness in infants, children and young adults. Because most people have now been vaccinated, mumps is now a rare disease in the United States. Of those people who do get mumps, up to half have very mild, or no symptoms, and therefore do not know they were infected.

What are the symptoms of mumps?

The most common symptoms are fever, headache, muscle aches, tiredness and loss of appetite followed by onset of parotitis (swollen and tender salivary glands under the ears – on one or both sides). Mumps can lead to hearing loss, aseptic meningitis (infection of the covering of the brain and spinal cord).

Are there complications of mumps?

Severe complications are rare. However, mumps can cause:

- Inflammation of the brain and/or tissue covering the brain and spinal cord (encephalitis/meningitis)
- Inflammation of the testicles (orchitis)
- Inflammation of the ovaries and/or breasts (oophoritis and mastitis)
- Spontaneous abortion particularly in early pregnancy (miscarriage)
- Deafness, usually permanent.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms typically appear 16-18 days after infection, but this period can range from 12-25 after infection.

How is mumps spread?

Mumps spread by mucus or droplets from the nose or throat of an infected person, usually when a person coughs or sneezes. Surfaces of items (e.g. toys) can also spread the virus if someone who is sick touches them without washing their hands, and someone else then touches the same surface and then rubs their eyes, mouth, nose, etc. (this time called fomite transmission).

How long is an infected person able to spread the disease?

Mumps virus has been isolated from respiratory secretions 3 days before the start of symptoms until 9 days after onset.

What is the treatment for mumps?

There is no specific treatment. Supportive care should be given as needed. If someone becomes very ill, they should seek medical attention. If someone seeks medical attention, they should call their doctor in advance so that they don't have to sit in the waiting room for a long time and possibly infect other patients.

How do I protect myself, my kids and my family?

Mumps vaccine (usually MMR), is the best way to prevent mumps. Other things people can do to prevent mumps and other infections is to wash hands well and often with soap, and to teach children to wash their hands too. Eating utensils should not be shared, and surfaces that are frequently touched (toys, doorknobs, tables, counters, etc) should also be regularly cleaned with soap and water, or cleaning wipes.

Where can I get the vaccine?

Most family and pediatric doctors keep vaccine in their clinics; and local [health departments](#) usually have vaccine. If you do not have a doctor for your child who needs to be vaccinated, call 1-800-720-9553 or 1-888-246-1215.