

Mumps

Date (February, 2017) – revised

What is mumps?

Mumps is a viral infection of the salivary glands. It is also referred to as infectious parotitis.

How is it spread?

The mumps virus is found most often in saliva and respiratory droplets. It is spread from person to person through coughing, sneezing or even talking or coming into contact with a person's saliva by sharing drinks, food or water bottles or by kissing.

Who is at risk of getting mumps?

Mumps infection is rare in Toronto, with an average of five cases reported per year from 1997 to 2009. When it does occur it usually infects infants, school-aged children and young adults. There have been a number of recent outbreaks of mumps in Canada primarily among young adults between 20 and 30 years of age. Most adults born before 1970 have been infected with mumps and are probably immune.

What are the symptoms of mumps?

Common symptoms include: swelling and pain in one or more salivary glands (sides of the cheeks and jaw), fever, headache, muscle aches and pains, fatigue and loss of appetite. One out of three people who are infected with mumps have symptoms of a cold but no salivary gland swelling. Less common symptoms may include swollen and tender testicles in males. These symptoms can last up to 10 days.

What are the complications associated with mumps?

Complications of mumps infection include encephalitis (infection in the brain), meningitis (infection in the lining of the brain), painful swelling of the testicles (orchitis) or the ovaries (oophoritis), pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas) or deafness. Pregnant women who become infected with mumps during the first three months of pregnancy are at risk of miscarriage.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Mumps symptoms begin 12 to 25 days after exposure.

What is the treatment for mumps?

There is no treatment for mumps. A virus causes mumps; therefore antibiotics will not treat this infection. Some medications can be given to relieve some of the symptoms.

When and for how long is a person able to spread mumps?

A person is most likely to spread the mumps virus to others in the 2 days before (up to 7 days) and 5 days after the salivary glands begin to swell.

Can mumps be prevented with a vaccine?

Yes. Two different vaccines can prevent mumps. They are MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) and MMRV (measles, mumps, rubella and chickenpox also known as varicella) vaccines. MMR vaccine is routinely given to children at 12 months of age. MMRV is routinely given before school entry (4 to 6 years of age). Two doses of vaccine normally provide life-long immunity.

Those born between 1970 and 1992 in Ontario may have only received one dose of mumps containing vaccine. If you are in this age group, get a second mumps vaccination (given as MMR) if you have not had one, especially if you are a post-secondary student or healthcare worker. Those born before 1970 are assumed to be immune to mumps through natural infection.

If you are unsure of your vaccination status, contact your healthcare provider or if you attended school in Toronto, call the Toronto Public Health Immunization Information Line at 416-392-1250.

What should I do if I think I have mumps?

Call your doctor if you have symptoms of mumps infection, or if you have been in contact with someone who has mumps. Tell your doctor that you think you have mumps before going to the doctor's office. This will allow the doctor to prepare for your visit and protect other patients.

Persons diagnosed with mumps or suspected of having mumps should not attend daycare, school or work, should not participate in group activities and should refrain from having visitors for 5 days following the salivary gland swelling. They should also avoid sharing food, drinks, cigarettes, water bottles, or kissing others.

Persons who are diagnosed or suspected of having mumps infection will be told to stay home for 5 days after salivary gland swelling or until a diagnosis of mumps is ruled out by laboratory testing.

How is mumps diagnosed?

Mumps is diagnosed with a blood test, a urine test and a swab from the throat or salivary gland.

What should I do if I have been in contact with someone who has had mumps?

Do not share saliva with others through activities such as kissing or sharing food, drinks, cigarettes, water bottles or musical instruments. Cover your mouth when you cough and sneeze into your sleeve. See your doctor if you start to develop symptoms of mumps.

Getting the mumps vaccine after being exposed to the virus will not prevent infection. However, if you don't become infected, the vaccine will provide protection against future exposures.

Can you get mumps more than once?

No. Once you have had mumps you cannot get it again.

Where can I get more information?

For more information, contact Toronto Health Connection: 416-338-7600, TTY: 416-392-0658.