

Mumps

What is mumps?

Mumps is an acute viral illness caused by the mumps virus. Anyone can become infected with mumps, but it is more common in infants, children and young adults. Severe complications are rare, however, mumps can cause inflammation of the brain (encephalitis) and/or tissue covering the brain and spinal cord (meningitis), inflammation of the testicles (orchitis), inflammation of the ovaries and/or breasts, spontaneous abortion (miscarriage) or deafness (usually permanent).

How do I get mumps?

Mumps is spread by mucus or droplets from the nose or throat of an infected person, usually when a person coughs or sneezes. Infected individuals who do not have symptoms can still infect others.

Symptoms

The main symptom of mumps is the swelling of one or more salivary glands on one or both sides of the face. The parotid glands (which are located within your cheek, near the jaw line, below your ears) are most frequently affected. Mumps cases often have fever, headache, muscle aches, fatigue and loss of appetite. One-third of infected individuals do not have obvious swelling of the salivary glands, but are still contagious.

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

The infectious period or time that an infected person can transmit mumps to others is from 3 days before symptoms appear to 9 days after symptoms appear. The incubation period, or the period from when a person is exposed to a virus to the onset of symptoms, is usually 16-18 days (range 12-25 days).

Treatment for mumps

- There is no specific treatment for mumps.

Prevention

Immunization is the only effective way to prevent mumps:

- The mumps vaccine, which is contained in the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine, can prevent the disease.
- All non-immunized individuals should be vaccinated.
- Follow the Childhood Immunization Schedule (ask your health care provider or local health department for a copy).

If you think you have mumps

- See your health care provider immediately.
- If your job involves caring for small children or healthcare, do not go to work and contact your health care provider.
- Children who have mumps should not go to school or child care settings for 5 days (count the first day of salivary gland swelling as day 1). However, persons whose symptoms continue past 5 days should be excluded for the duration of their illness, up to 9 days after swelling onset.
- Health care employees should be excluded from work for 9 days; count the first day of salivary gland swelling as day 1.