



# Mumps

## What is mumps?

Mumps is an infection that is caused by the mumps virus. It is most common in young children, but adolescents and adults can also get mumps.

## What are the symptoms of mumps?

Mumps is characterized by fever, and swelling and tenderness of one or more salivary glands, usually the parotid gland. The parotid gland is situated under the ears.

## How do you get mumps?

Mumps is spread when a person comes in contact with an infected person. It is spread through droplets from the nose, mouth or throat through coughing, sneezing, sharing drinks and kissing, or from touching surfaces that are contaminated with the droplets from an infected person.

## When is mumps contagious?

Mumps can be contagious from 7 days before, to 5 days after, the onset of symptoms. Children diagnosed with mumps should be excluded from attending school or childcare facilities until 5 days after the onset of symptoms.

## Is mumps dangerous?

Complications of a mumps infection are rare, but can be dangerous. Mumps can cause meningitis, an infection of the fluid and lining covering the brain and spinal cord. Meningitis may occur in 1-10% of mumps cases. Also, swelling of one or both testicles occurs in up to 20% to 30% of teenage boys or adult men, which can cause sterility in rare cases. Other rare complications include swelling of the ovaries in women, swelling of the pancreas and hearing loss. Mumps infection during the first trimester of pregnancy can result in an increased risk of spontaneous abortions.

## Is there treatment for mumps?

There is no specific treatment for mumps. However, individuals may require treatment or hospitalization if they develop serious complications from this infection.

## **How can I protect myself against mumps?**

The best way to protect yourself against mumps is to receive the mumps vaccine. This vaccine is combined with the vaccine for measles and rubella, and is known as the MMR vaccine. MMR is a very safe vaccine. One dose of the mumps vaccine provides immunity for 62% to 91% of individuals, and a second dose increases immunity levels to 95%. The vaccine is given to children at 12 months of age and again at 4 to 6 years of age.

## **How do I know if I am protected against mumps?**

After being infected with mumps, immunity is generally lifelong. Immunization with 2 doses of the mumps vaccine provides almost 100% protection against mumps. Adults born prior to 1970 are assumed to have acquired natural immunity to mumps. Adults born in or after 1970 who do not have documentation of immunity to mumps should receive 2 doses of the MMR vaccine. If you are unsure of your immunization status, contact your health care provider.

## **What should I do if I am exposed to mumps?**

Avoid kissing and sharing of anything by mouth, including food, drinks and straws, for 25 days following your exposure to mumps. It can take up to 25 days to develop the disease after an exposure.

## **What should I do if I develop the symptoms of mumps?**

If you develop symptoms of mumps, you should be assessed by a physician, and notify the health care facility that you plan to visit so that staff are aware of your symptoms prior to your arrival. In the meantime, stay at home to avoid potentially exposing other people (“home isolation”). Mumps is diagnosed by a blood test, a urine sample and a buccal swab.

For further information, visit [OttawaPublicHealth.ca](http://OttawaPublicHealth.ca), or visit the websites listed below:

- Canadian Paediatric Society  
<http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/mumps>
- Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care  
<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/publications/immune/mmr.aspx>

August 2019