

Mumps Fact Sheet

What is mumps? Mumps is an acute viral disease characterized by fever, swelling and tenderness of one or more of the salivary glands.

Who gets 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. Mumps is more common during winter and spring.

How is mumps spread? Mumps is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezed and sends the mumps virus into the air. The virus can land in other people's noses or throats when they breathe or put their fingers in their mouths or nose after touching or handling an infected surface.

What are the symptoms of mumps? Symptoms of mumps include fever, headache, and swelling and tenderness of one or more of the salivary glands located close to the jaw. The salivary gland most often affected is the parotid gland (located just below the front of the ear). Approximately 1/3 of infected people do not exhibit symptoms.

How soon after infection do symptoms occur? The incubation period is usually 16 to 18 days, although it may vary from 14 to 25 days.

What complications have been associated with mumps? Mumps can cause encephalitis (inflammation of the brain), meningitis (inflammation of the covering of the brain and spinal column), inflammation of the testicles or ovaries, inflammation of the pancreas, and deafness (usually permanent).

When and for how long is a person able to spread mumps? Mumps is generally transmitted from about 3 days before symptoms appear to about 4 days after, although the virus has been isolated from saliva as early as 7 days before to as late as 9 days after onset of symptoms.

Does past infection with mumps make a person immune?

YES. Immunity acquired after contracting the disease is usually permanent.

Is there a vaccine for mumps? YES. Mumps vaccine is given on or after a child's first birthday, and is usually administered in combination with measles and rubella vaccine. The MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine is highly effective and usually produces lifelong immunity against mumps.

What can be done to prevent the spread of mumps?

The single most effective control measure is maintaining the highest possible level of immunization in the community. Children with mump are not allowed to attend school for 9 days following onset of swelling until swelling disappears. All cases of mumps must be reported to the local health department and all families of students who have not been immunized in the school must be contacted to alert them for symptoms