

Mumps

What is mumps?

Mumps is a viral illness that causes swelling in the glands around the cheeks and jaw. Mumps was a very common infection in infants, children and young adults before a vaccine preventing measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) became available in Canada in 1969. Most people born between 1970 and 1991 have received one dose of the mumps vaccine in the form of a trivalent MMR vaccine.

Mumps is caused by the *paramyxovirus* and is now a rare infection. Mumps infection can be confirmed by a simple blood/urine test for mumps antibodies. Any person who has swelling of the neck lasting two days or more should seek medical attention and laboratory testing to rule out mumps infection and prevent an outbreak. Doctors may contact York Region Public Health to arrange for laboratory testing.

Mumps can affect anyone who has not had the disease or is not immunized against it.

What are the symptoms of mumps?

Symptoms of mumps may appear within 12 to 25 days after exposure to the virus and may include:

- Parotitis, or painful swelling of one or both salivary glands located within your cheek, near your jaw line or below your ears
- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches and pains
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Respiratory symptoms similar to a cold may also occur in children less than five years old

In severe cases, mumps can cause complications such as:

- Meningitis (inflammation of the brain and spinal cord with headaches or a stiff neck)
- Inflammation and swelling of the testicles in males, which in some cases can result in sterility
- Inflammation and swelling of the ovaries and/or the mammary glands of the breast in females
- Inflammation of the pancreas
- Hearing loss/deafness (one-sided and usually permanent)
- Miscarriage, if infection happens in the first trimester of pregnancy

How does mumps spread?

Mumps spreads easily from person-to-person. People with mumps carry the virus in their respiratory secretions – their saliva and the droplets from their nose and throat. When they talk, cough or sneeze, the droplets spread and can enter the mouth and nose of other people, causing new infections. Mumps can also be spread through sharing food, drinks and kissing.

A person with mumps is contagious from seven days before the swelling appears until five days after the swelling appears.



How do you prevent mumps?

To avoid getting mumps, make sure you are vaccinated. Two doses of MMR vaccine are recommended, normally given at 12 months of age and between four and six years of age. If you were born between 1970 and 1991, you may have only received one dose of MMR vaccine, and should receive a second dose.

MMR vaccine is effective in about 95 per cent of people. Most people will have no side effects; however mild redness, swelling and pain at the injection site may occur. MMR vaccine can cause a rash and/or fever in some people five to 12 days after the needle is given. This may last for a few days. Allergic reactions to the MMR vaccine and other serious reactions are very rare.

The vaccine is not recommended for anyone who:

- Has had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of this vaccine
- Is allergic to gelatin, eggs or an antibiotic called neomycin
- Has a disease that lowers the body's ability to fight infections
- Is taking medication that lowers the body's ability to fight infections
- Is pregnant
- Is ill with a fever
- Has received immune globulin or blood transfusions in the past three months
- Has documented evidence of previous infection with each of measles, mumps and rubella
- Is certain they have previously been vaccinated with two doses of MMR

Note: Women trying to get pregnant should speak with their doctor before getting the MMR vaccine. Women who find out they are pregnant after getting vaccinated with MMR vaccine, should speak to their doctor as soon as possible.

To avoid spreading the illness to others, a person with mumps should:

- Stay home
- Stay away from infants less than one year of age as well as anyone who is not immune
- Wash hands well and often
- Avoid sharing eating utensils and other personal items

Objects and surfaces that are frequently touched by the sick person should be cleaned often.

What is the treatment for mumps?

There is no specific treatment for mumps. Acetaminophen and hot or cold compresses may relieve the pain in the salivary glands.

