

What is mumps?

Mumps is an infectious disease caused by the mumps virus. Mumps is not very common in Australia now due to high levels of immunisation.

What are the symptoms?

The typical symptoms of mumps include fever, loss of appetite, tiredness and headache followed by swelling and tenderness of one or more salivary glands. The parotid salivary glands, located in the cheek at the jaw line below the ears, are most commonly affected. About one third of infected people may not show any symptoms at all.

Complications from mumps are uncommon but can include inflammation of the brain (encephalitis), the lining of the brain and spinal cord (meningitis), the testicles (orchitis), the ovaries (oophoritis) and breasts (mastitis). The pancreas, liver and heart can also become inflamed. Other complications of mumps include pregnancy miscarriage and hearing loss. Sterility (inability to have children) in males following orchitis is extremely rare.

How is mumps spread?

Mumps is spread through contact with respiratory droplets or direct contact with an infected person.

It is important that a person infected with mumps avoid contact with others to reduce the risk of spreading the disease. They should be excluded from school, childcare or work until they are no longer considered infectious.

How long does a person remain infectious?

A person with mumps can be infectious up to 7 days before and 9 days after the swelling of the salivary glands begins. People are most infectious from 2 days before and up to 4 days after the onset of symptoms. Those without symptoms can also pass on the disease.

Who is most at risk from mumps?

Anyone who comes into contact with the virus can get mumps, unless they have immunity from past natural infection or from vaccination. Mumps is usually a more severe illness in people infected after puberty.

Mumps infection during the first trimester of pregnancy may result in miscarriage. Mumps infection in later pregnancy is not associated with a risk of congenital abnormalities.

What if I have been in contact with someone with mumps?

It takes between 12 and 25 days (commonly 16-18 days) after coming into contact with mumps for symptoms to develop. Anyone with suspected mumps should see their doctor.

Mumps is a notifiable disease, which means the doctor or the laboratory, is required to notify ACT Health if a case is diagnosed.

How is it diagnosed?

A doctor may suspect mumps based on the person's signs and symptoms. A blood test or swab from the throat or urine specimen can confirm the diagnosis.

What is the treatment?

There is no specific treatment for mumps. Simple analgesics can help reduce discomfort and fever. Rest and drinking plenty of fluids is important.

Immunisation Recommendations

Vaccination is the best way to prevent being infected with mumps. Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine is offered to all children under the funded National Immunisation Program at 12 months of age and then again in combination with the chickenpox vaccine (MMRV) at 18 months of age. To be fully vaccinated, people need to receive two doses of a mumps containing vaccine at least four weeks apart.

How do I know if I have been vaccinated or if I am immune to mumps?

If you were born prior to 1966 in Australia, it is likely that you had mumps in your childhood and are now immune. If you were born during or after 1966, and have not had mumps, you should have received two doses of a mumps containing vaccine at least four weeks apart to be considered immune. However, if you are unsure, it is safe to have the vaccine more than twice.

Are there any side effects from the vaccination?

Side effects from the MMR vaccine are usually mild and temporary. They may include fever, tiredness, faint red rash (not infectious), localised swelling at the injection site, swollen glands and feeling unwell. This vaccine is not recommended for people who are immune-suppressed or for pregnant women. Pregnancy should be avoided for 28 days following vaccination. MMR vaccination may also need to be delayed if you have had a recent blood transfusion or blood product.

Need more information?

For more information about mumps, contact your doctor or call the Health Protection Service, Communicable Disease Control Information Line during business hours on **(02) 6205 2155**.

Communicable Disease Control Section at Health Protection Service is

responsible for the investigation and surveillance of notifiable or infectious conditions in the ACT in order to control or prevent their spread in the community. This includes the promotion of immunisation, education and other strategies that help to limit the spread of diseases.

Mumps is a notifiable disease. Cases notified to ACT Health are investigated by Public Health Officers.

Acknowledgements

1. Heymann DL, 2015, *Control of Communicable Diseases Manual*, 20th edition.
2. NHMRC, 2013, *The Australian Immunisation Handbook*, 10th edition.

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Enquiries: Canberra 13ACT1 or 132281
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