

Mumps

What is mumps?

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

What are the symptoms?

The typical symptoms of mumps include fever, loss of appetite, muscle aches, tiredness and headache followed by swelling and tenderness of one or more salivary glands. The swelling may be on one side or both sides. 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 5 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 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?

Symptoms usually develop between 12 and 25 days (commonly 16-18 days) after coming into contact with the mumps virus. Anyone with suspected mumps should see their doctor.

How is it diagnosed?

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

What is the treatment?

There is no specific treatment for mumps. People with mumps should see their doctor for advice on how to manage their symptoms. They should also drink plenty of fluids and rest.

Immunisation recommendations

Vaccination is the best way to prevent being infected with mumps. A measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine is funded under the National Immunisation Program. This vaccine is offered to all children 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. If you are unsure whether you are immune, speak with your doctor about getting vaccinated. It is safe to have the vaccine more than twice.

Are there any side effects from the vaccination?

Side effects from the MMR and MMRV vaccines 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. These vaccines are not recommended for people who are immune-suppressed or for pregnant women. Pregnancy should be avoided for 28 days following vaccination. MMR or MMRV 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. *Control of Communicable Diseases Manual*. 20th edn. Washington: American Public Health Association, USA; 2015.
2. Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI). *Australian Immunisation Handbook*, Australian Government Department of Health, Canberra, 2018. Available from: <https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au>

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