



Indiana State Department of Health

Epidemiology Resource Center

Mumps: Frequently Asked Questions

What is mumps?

Mumps is a respiratory disease caused by a virus.

What are the symptoms of mumps?

Mumps is best known for the puffy cheeks and swollen jaw that it causes. This is a result of swollen salivary glands under the ears. Other common symptoms include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Orchitis (testicular swelling) in males

Symptoms typically appear 16 to 18 days after infection, but this period can range from 12 to 25 days after infection. Some people who get mumps have very mild or no symptoms, and often they do not know they have the disease. Most people with mumps recover completely in a few weeks.

How is mumps spread?

Mumps is spread through indirect or direct contact with an infected person's nose or throat droplets. It can be spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes. People with mumps can spread it for up to 2 days before and 5 days after the start of symptoms. Anyone with mumps should stay home during that time to prevent the spread of infection. Those experiencing symptoms of mumps should call ahead to their healthcare provider to be evaluated. People with mumps can also spread the disease before they even feel sick.

Who is at risk for mumps?

Anyone who has not had two doses of mumps vaccine (usually measles-mumps-rubella, or MMR) is at risk for mumps. The risk is greatest for international travelers or people who are in contact with international travelers.

Are there complications of mumps infection?

There is an increased risk of miscarriage in women who are infected with mumps during the first trimester of pregnancy. Complications of mumps, such as encephalitis (swelling of the brain), meningitis and hearing loss, are relatively uncommon, but are more likely to occur in adults. Orchitis (testicular swelling) occurs in 3.3-10% of males who have completed puberty with onset of testicular swelling 5-7 days after parotid swelling. Very rarely, infertility may occur in post-pubertal males who developed testicular swelling with mumps infection. Hearing loss is a rare complication of mumps infection in children

How do I know if I or my child has mumps?

See your doctor if you or your child have symptoms of mumps. Your doctor may test you for mumps. Many viruses and bacteria can cause swelling and tenderness similar to that caused by the mumps virus. Your doctor may also test you to see if you are immune to mumps.

How is mumps treated?

Since mumps is caused by a virus, antibiotics cannot cure or treat mumps. Most treatment is geared toward alleviating symptoms. Bed rest, a soft diet (to reduce pain when chewing) and pain reliever for headaches and muscle aches are often recommended.

How can mumps be prevented?

The MMR vaccine is safe and effective at preventing mumps. Most schools and some child-care centers require proof of vaccination before entry.

Did I get the MMR vaccine as a child?

Children are routinely vaccinated for mumps at 12 through 15 months of age, and again at 4 through 6 years of age, before going to kindergarten. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says anyone born in 1957 or later who does not have evidence of immunity against mumps should have two doses of MMR vaccine, separated by at least 28 days. People born before 1957 do not need to be vaccinated due to the high chances they either had mumps or developed other immunity to it prior to routine mass vaccination efforts.

What if I don't know if I had the MMR vaccine?

If you have not had mumps and have no record of getting the vaccine, see your doctor and discuss whether a dose of vaccine is appropriate.

How effective is the vaccine?

MMR vaccine prevents most, but not all, cases of mumps and complications caused by the disease. Two doses of the vaccine are 88 percent effective at protecting against mumps; one dose is 78 percent effective.

I've heard that I can get a booster vaccine. Do I need one?

If you have received two doses of the MMR vaccine, you can get a third dose, which is referred to as a booster dose, to help protect you. Talk with your healthcare provider to see if this is a good fit for you.

I got mumps even though I got the vaccine. Does that mean it didn't work?

MMR vaccine prevents most, but not all, cases of mumps and complications caused by the disease. People who have received two doses of the MMR vaccine are about nine times less likely to get mumps than unvaccinated people who have the same exposure to mumps virus. However, some people who receive two doses of MMR can still get mumps, especially if they have prolonged, close contact with someone who has the disease. If a vaccinated person does get mumps, they will likely have less severe illness than an unvaccinated person.

Is mumps common in the U.S.?

Mumps is no longer very common in the United States, but outbreaks continue to occur. Outbreaks have most commonly occurred in places where people have had prolonged, close contact with a person who has mumps, such as attending the same class, playing on the same sports team, or living in the same dormitory.

What else should I do to prevent mumps from spreading?

In addition to staying away from others when you have mumps, you can help prevent the virus from spreading by

- Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and put your used tissue in the trash can. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands.
- Washing your hands often with soap and water.
- Avoiding sharing drinks or eating utensils.
- Disinfecting frequently touched surfaces, such as toys, doorknobs, tables, counters.

What about travel?

Mumps is a common problem in many other parts of the world. Though mumps vaccination is a part of the routine vaccination schedule, it is a good idea to check the CDC travel guidelines for the country or countries you will be visiting and ensure you are up-to-date on your routine and travel vaccinations before traveling.

Where can I find more information?

More information on mumps can be found at:

- <http://www.in.gov/isdh/25450.htm>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/mumps/about/index.html>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/mumps/default.htm>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs/vacc-specific/mmr.html>