

New York State Department of Health

Mumps

Updated: September 2008

What is mumps?

Mumps is a viral disease characterized by fever, headache, muscle weakness, stiff neck, loss of appetite, swelling and tenderness of one or more of the salivary glands situated along the angle of the jaw and inside the mouth, including the parotid gland located within the cheeks just below the front of the ear.

Who gets mumps?

The number of cases of mumps decreased dramatically in the United States following the introduction of the mumps vaccine in 1967, from an estimated 100,000 -200,000 to fewer than 300 cases annually. In the United States, since 2001, an average of 265 mumps cases has been reported each year.

Recently, there has been an increase in the number of mumps cases reported. In 2006, over 6,000 cases of mumps were reported across the nation.

How is mumps spread?

Mumps is transmitted by direct contact with saliva produced in the mouth and discharges from the nose and throat of infected individuals.

What are the symptoms of mumps?

Symptoms of mumps include a low-grade fever, headache, muscle aches, stiff neck, tiredness and loss of appetite followed by swelling and tenderness of one or more of the salivary glands, including the parotid gland. Approximately one-third of infected people do not have noticeable salivary gland swelling. Up to 50% of mumps infections are not specific to any symptoms and 15-20% of all cases present without any symptoms.

How soon after infection do symptoms occur?

The incubation period is usually 16 to 18 days, although it may vary from 12 to 25 days.

What complications have been associated with mumps?

Severe complications are rare. However, mumps can cause inflammation of the brain and /or tissue covering the brain and spinal cord (encephalitis/meningitis), inflammation of the testicles (orchitis), inflammation of the ovaries (oophoritis) and/or breasts (mastitis), inflammation of the pancreas (pancreatitis), spontaneous abortion and deafness, which is usually permanent.

What is the treatment for mumps?

There is no specific treatment for mumps.

When and for how long is a person able to spread mumps?

Mumps is contagious three days before until 5 days after the onset of parotitis (inflammation of the parotid gland).

Does past infection with mumps make a person immune?

Immunity acquired after contracting the disease is usually long term.

Is there a vaccine for mumps?

Yes. The mumps vaccine, which is contained in the MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine, can prevent this disease. Mumps-containing vaccine is recommended for anyone born on or after January 1, 1957, who does not have a history of physician-diagnosed mumps or a blood test confirming mumps immunity. Evidence of immunity through documentation of adequate vaccination is now defined as 1 dose of a live mumps virus vaccine for preschool-aged children and adults not at high risk and 2 doses for school-aged children (i.e., grades K–12,) and for adults at high risk (i.e., healthcare personnel, international travelers, and students at post-high-school educational institutions). The first dose of MMR is given at 12 to 15 months of age and the second dose is given between 4 to 6 years of age. If you do not know if you have been vaccinated or had mumps disease diagnosed by a physician, vaccination is recommended.

In New York State, mumps immunization is required of all children enrolled in pre-kindergarten programs and school. College students are also required to demonstrate immunity against mumps. It is recommended that healthcare personnel demonstrate immunity against mumps.

What can be done to prevent the spread of mumps?

The single most effective control measure is to be vaccinated with two MMR vaccines unless there is evidence of prior immunity to mumps. Persons diagnosed with mumps should remain at home during their infectious period (until after 5 days of symptom onset).

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