

# Fact Sheet

## Mumps

### What is Mumps?



Mumps is a viral infection that primarily affects the parotid glands — one of three pairs of saliva-producing (salivary) glands, situated below and in front of the ears. If a child contracts mumps, it can cause swelling in one or both parotid glands.

Mumps was common in the United States until mumps vaccination became routine. Since then, the number of cases has dropped dramatically, so the odds of getting mumps are low. Complications of mumps, such as hearing loss, are potentially serious, but rare.

### Spread of Disease

Mumps is spread by droplets of saliva or mucus from the mouth, nose, or throat of an infected person, usually when the person coughs, sneezes, or talks. Items used by an infected person, such as soft drink cans or eating utensils, can also be contaminated with the virus, which may spread to others if those items are shared. In addition, the virus may spread when someone with mumps touches items or surfaces without washing their hands and someone else then touches the same surface and rubs their mouth or nose.

Most mumps transmission likely occurs before the salivary glands begin to swell and up to 5 days after the swelling begins. Therefore, CDC recommends isolation of mumps patients for 5 days after their glands begin to swell.

**Mumps can be prevented by the MMR (Measles, Mumps, and Rubella) vaccine. Doctors recommend that children get two doses of the MMR vaccine for best protection.**

- The first dose at 12 to 15 months of age
- The second dose at 4 to 6 years of age

### Signs and Symptoms

Up to half of people who get mumps have very mild or no symptoms, and therefore do not know they were infected with mumps.

The most common symptoms include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Swollen and tender salivary glands under the ears on one or both sides

Symptoms typically appear 16-18 days after infection, but this period can range from 12-25 days after infection.

### Diagnosis

If a doctor suspects that a person has mumps, a virus culture or a blood test may be needed. The immune system normally makes antibodies to help fight an infection. So, if a person has mumps, the blood test can detect the antibodies fighting the mumps virus.

## Treatment

Because mumps is caused by a virus, antibiotics aren't effective. Like most viral illnesses, a mumps infection must simply run its course. Fortunately, most children and adults recover from an uncomplicated case of mumps within about two weeks.

As a general rule, a person no longer considered contagious may safely return to work or school one week after a diagnosis of mumps.

**Scientists in the United States and other countries have carefully studied the MMR vaccine. No link has been found between autism and the MMR vaccine.**

## Complications

Most people with mumps recover fully. However, mumps can occasionally cause complications, and some of them can be serious.

Complications may occur even if a person does not have swollen salivary glands and are more common in people who have reached puberty.

Complications of mumps can include:

- Inflammation of the testicles (orchitis) in males who have reached puberty, which rarely leads to sterility.
- Inflammation of the brain (encephalitis) and/or tissue covering the brain and spinal cord (meningitis).
- Inflammation of the ovaries (oophoritis) and/or breasts (mastitis) in females who have reached puberty.
- Temporary or permanent deafness.

## People at Risk

People who have not been vaccinated, particularly children and teens, are at risk for developing mumps.

## Prevention

The MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine is the best way to prevent mumps. The MMR vaccine should be routinely given when children are 12-15 months old, and a second dose should be given when they are 4-6 years old. Two doses of the vaccine are more effective against mumps than one dose and prevent most, but not all, cases of mumps and mumps complications.



**For more sources of information on this topic visit:**

ST. CLAIR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT [www.scchealth.co](http://www.scchealth.co)

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES [www.michigan.gov/mdhhs](http://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs)

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

THE MAYO CLINIC [www.mayoclinic.org](http://www.mayoclinic.org)