

# Mumps



Mumps is an infection caused by a type of virus called a paramyxovirus. It is very contagious and spread in saliva, the same way as a cold or flu. This means it can be caught from an infected person coughing, sneezing, etc. It can also be caught from touching infected objects - for example, door handles.

Mumps infection is less common since the introduction of the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine in the UK. Mumps infection is now most common in children who have not received the vaccine.

It is very unusual for children under one year to have mumps.

## What are the usual symptoms of mumps?

- Swelling and pain of one or both parotid glands are the usual main symptoms. The parotid glands are the main salivary glands. They are just below the ears and cannot normally be seen or felt when well. The salivary glands make saliva which drains into the mouth.
- The mouth may feel dry.
- Chewing and swallowing may be sore.
- Fever (high temperature); headache, feeling tired and being off food may develop for a few days. These symptoms may occur before parotid gland swelling occurs.
- Mild abdominal (tummy) pain may occur.
- Some individuals may have no symptoms at all,

The swelling of the parotid glands usually lasts for 4-8 days. Mumps is normally a mild illness, but complications sometimes occur so vaccination is included as part of the UK **Routine childhood immunisation schedule**.

The immune system makes antibodies during the infection. These clear the virus and then provide lifelong immunity. It is therefore very rare to have more than one episode of mumps.

## How is mumps diagnosed?

A doctor will usually diagnose mumps based on symptoms and the type of glands that are swollen. A saliva swab may also be taken and sent to the laboratory to confirm the diagnosis.

## What is the treatment for mumps?

There is no medicine that kills the mumps virus. Most people start to feel better after about one week with no long-term problems.

Treatment aims to ease symptoms until the body's immune system clears the virus.

- Paracetamol or ibuprofen can ease fever and pain. Aspirin should not be given to children
- Give children lots to drink, particularly if they have a fever. Fruit juice may stimulate the parotid gland to make more saliva, causing more pain so water is best if this occurs.

### Are there any complications of mumps?

Complications in young children are rare. Teenagers and adults are more likely to develop complications, which may include one (or more), of the following:

- Approximately 25% of males with mumps over the age of 12 years will develop a painful swollen testis and occasionally both are affected. In very rare cases this may cause infertility.
- Hearing loss can sometimes occur in people with mumps. This is usually only transient and improves with time. Very rarely, mumps can cause permanent deafness.

### How can spread be prevented?

Mumps is highly infectious and can be spread by droplets from the nose, throat and by saliva.

- Encourage staff and children to practice good hygiene at all times
- Individuals should be encouraged to have good respiratory hygiene (covering nose and mouth with a disposable tissue when coughing or sneezing, discarding it immediately afterwards and washing hands straight away).
- Regular hand washing should be encouraged (especially after coughing, sneezing, helping affected individuals with their respiratory hygiene, contact with potentially contaminated objects etc.).
- Exclude individuals with suspected mumps from school until five days after their glands have swollen.
- Advise parents to seek medical review.

### Mumps immunisation

An effective vaccine to prevent mumps (the MMR vaccination) is available as part of the UK **Routine childhood immunisation schedule**. Vaccination is encouraged even if an individual has a history of suspected mumps as many other viruses cause similar symptoms so mis-diagnosis is a possibility. Mumps can be prevented in 95% of cases by having the routine MMR vaccination in childhood or later in life.

More information on mumps can be found in chapter nine of the **Health protection in schools and childcare facilities** guidance.