

Health Office Fact Sheet



Mumps

Mumps usually describes an acute viral infection involving the salivary glands, where the glands swell and become painful. While the parotid glands (at the side of the face, in front of the ears) are those most commonly affected, these symptoms are found in only 30-40% of cases.

Mumps virus can infect other tissues. When it infects the genital organs it produces painful swelling of the testes in up to 30% of males and the ovaries in up to 5% of females. Sterility due to this is rare.

Mumps virus is also a common cause of viral meningitis. The death rate is around 1 in 10,000 cases. Most patients recover fully within 7 days and will have lifelong immunity to the virus.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms include: fever, swelling and tenderness of one or more salivary glands.

What is the incubation period?

The incubation period is between 12 to 25 days.

How long is a patient infectious?

From 7 days before to 9 days after the parotid glands first swell. Hence a person with mumps should stay off work or school until 9 days after the parotid glands first swell.

How is mumps spread?

Mumps is spread by respiratory droplets or by direct contact with the saliva of a case.

Vaccination for mumps

An effective vaccine to prevent mumps is available and is part of the measles, mumps and rubella MMR vaccine, which is routinely offered to children between 12 to 18 months of age. A second dose is offered as part of the routine pre-school booster programme. A previous history of mumps is not a contraindication for MMR vaccine since the diagnosis is not an easy one to make. There is no benefit in giving MMR to susceptible people who have been in contact with a case of mumps because the vaccine will not produce an antibody response quickly enough. However, exposure to mumps does not guarantee a person will catch the infection. Giving the vaccine may protect the person from measles or rubella in the future. It may also protect against mumps if the person fails to get the infection following exposure.

Advice for pregnant women

Mumps infection in the first trimester of pregnancy may increase the rate of spontaneous abortion, probably owing to the effects of fever on the pregnancy. There is no evidence that mumps in pregnancy causes genital malformations.

Advice for immunocompromised people

Mumps is not dangerous in these individuals, in fact the illness is often milder than in otherwise fit people.

Prophylaxis

There is none. However we advise vaccination of close contacts under 25 years old who have not had 2 doses of MMR, to prevent the onward spread in those who have not yet been infected.

This information was taken from:

- http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAwebFile/HPAweb_C/1194947392852

For more information on mumps the following web sites may be of use:

- <http://www.immunisation.nhs.uk/files/factsheets1-3.pdf>
- <http://kidshealth.org/parent/general/sick/mumps.html>