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What is mumps?

Mumps is a contagious disease caused by the mumps virus. It mainly affects the salivary glands. Mumps is now uncommon in the U.S. due to widespread vaccination. However, it is still common in many countries, so it is important to get vaccinated.

Who gets mumps?

Anyone who is not protected against mumps is at risk of getting the disease. This is mostly people who are not vaccinated or not completely vaccinated against mumps. Some groups of people are more likely to spread disease because they have prolonged close contact with each other. People at increased risk include school-age children, college students, international travelers, and health care personnel.

Can a person who had mumps get it again?

No. People who have had mumps do not get it again.

How is mumps spread?

Mumps is spread through saliva or respiratory droplets from the mouth, nose, or throat of an infected person, usually when a person coughs or sneezes. Mumps can also spread from sharing items that may have saliva on them, such as eating utensils, drinks, or lip balm.

When and for how long is someone able to spread the disease?

Mumps is contagious from two days before until five days after the onset of swelling (parotitis).

What are the symptoms of mumps?

The most well-known signs of mumps are puffy cheeks and tender, swollen jaw caused by swelling of the salivary glands. Early signs and symptoms of mumps can begin a few days before swelling and include fever, headache, muscle aches, and fatigue. Mumps is usually mild. About 1 in 3 people do not have any signs or symptoms or present with respiratory infection without any apparent salivary gland swelling. However, mumps can cause more serious illness and complications.

What are the complications associated with mumps?

Complications from mumps are rare and have declined since routine use of vaccine. When complications do occur, they are more common in people who have reached puberty. These include central nervous system disorders such as encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) and meningitis

(inflammation of the covering of the brain and spinal column), miscarriage of a pregnancy, arthritis, pancreatic involvement, or deafness. Swelling of the testicles occurs in up to 10% of males who have reached puberty; this does not usually result in permanent sterility.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

Symptoms of mumps usually appear 16 to 18 days after exposure but may appear any time within 12 to 25 days after exposure.

How is mumps diagnosed?

A healthcare provider can usually diagnose mumps by the clinical symptoms, particularly the swelling of the glands in the face and neck. In addition, laboratory tests can be performed to confirm the presence of the mumps virus.

What is the treatment for mumps?

Supportive care to relieve symptoms may include applying intermittent ice or heat to the affected neck area, and pain relievers (e.g., acetaminophen). Warm saltwater gargles, soft foods, and extra fluids may also help. Avoid fruit juice or acidic foods, since these stimulate the salivary glands, which can be painful.

Do people who have been in contact with someone with mumps need to be tested and treated?

Close contacts of someone with mumps should be monitored for illness, tested if they develop mumps symptoms, and vaccinated if they are not immune to mumps.

How can mumps be prevented?

Mumps can be prevented with MMR vaccine. This vaccine protects against three diseases: measles, mumps, and rubella. Two doses of MMR vaccine are recommended to protect children against mumps. Teens and adults should also be up to date on MMR vaccinations. Immunization of as many children as possible is the best way to prevent mumps cases and outbreaks. Talk to a healthcare provider if you have questions about the MMR vaccine.

How can I get more information about mumps?

- If you have concerns about mumps, contact a healthcare provider.
- Contact your local health department. You can find your local health department at vdh.virginia.gov/health-department-locator/.
- Visit the CDC page on mumps at cdc.gov/mumps/about/index.html for more information.

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