

Mumps

What is mumps?

Mumps is a disease caused by the mumps virus. Mumps was a common childhood disease before vaccination. Now it is more common in young adults.

Mumps can cause serious illness, such as inflammation of the brain (encephalitis), which can lead to convulsions or brain damage. About 1 in 20 people with mumps gets mumps meningitis, an infection of the lining of the brain.

Mumps can also cause temporary deafness. Permanent deafness occurs in less than 5 in 100,000 people who get mumps.

About 1 in 4 adult men and post-pubertal boys with mumps develop painful swelling of the testicles. One in 20 women develops swelling of the ovaries. Both of these conditions are temporary and rarely result in permanent damage or sterility.

Mumps infection in the early stage of pregnancy may increase the rate of miscarriage. Mumps does not appear to cause birth defects.

Mumps Vaccine

The measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine provides protection against mumps and is part of the routine childhood vaccine program. For more information, see

BC HealthFile [#14a Measles, Mumps, Rubella \(MMR\) Vaccine](#).

How is mumps spread?

Mumps is contagious and spreads easily. Mumps is spread by contact with respiratory secretions like saliva. Sharing food, drinks or cigarettes, or kissing someone who has the virus can also put you at risk. When an infected person coughs or sneezes, the virus spreads through droplets in the air. You can be exposed to the virus even if you are a few feet away from someone with mumps.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include fever, aches and pains, headaches, and swelling of the salivary glands, especially the parotid glands that are at the side of the cheeks.

Up to 1 in 5 people with mumps do not have any symptoms. About 1 in 3 people with mumps do not have salivary gland swelling. However, they can still spread the mumps virus to other people.

Symptoms can appear from 16 to 25 days after a person is infected with the mumps virus. A person with mumps can spread the virus to others from 7 days *before* to 9 days *after* symptoms develop.

Have you been exposed to mumps?

If you have been in contact with someone with mumps, and you were born after 1970

and have not been vaccinated, you should contact your local public health unit. You will be advised to receive one dose of MMR vaccine to protect you against mumps in the future.

If You Think You Have Mumps

If you have swollen salivary glands and especially if you have been in contact with a person with mumps or traveled to an area with a mumps outbreak, have yourself examined by a doctor. Bring your immunization record with you. A physical examination, blood test, and swab of your salivary glands inside your mouth or a urine sample will be collected to make the diagnosis of mumps. Avoid making contact with new people for 9 days after your symptoms start, and avoid sharing your saliva with your household and other close contacts to prevent them from getting infected.

Home Treatment

After seeing a doctor, the following home treatment tips may help you to be more comfortable while you rest and recover.

- Drink plenty of fluids such as water, juice and soup, especially if you have a fever.
- For a fever, use acetaminophen (Tylenol®, Tempra®, Atasol®) to bring the fever down. ASA or Aspirin® should NOT be given to anyone under 20 years of age due to the risk of Reye Syndrome with some virus infections.
- Get plenty of rest.

- Use an ice pack or heating pad for a swollen or painful jaw. Be sure to place a light towel on the jaw to protect the skin.
- Avoid sour foods or sour liquids because the inflamed salivary glands are very sensitive to sour tastes.
- Eat ice chips or flavoured ice treats, and soft foods that do not require chewing.

For more BC HealthFile topics visit www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles/index.stm, or visit your local public health unit.

Call the BC NurseLine to speak to a registered nurse, available 24-hours every day:

- In Greater Vancouver, call 604-215-4700
- In BC, call toll-free 1-866-215-4700
- Deaf and hearing-impaired, call 1-866-889-4700
- Pharmacist available 5pm to 9am every day
- Translation services in over 130 languages upon request.

Visit BC HealthGuide OnLine – a world of health information you can trust at www.bchealthguide.org



BC Centre for Disease Control
AN AGENCY OF THE PROVINCIAL HEALTH SERVICES AUTHORITY