

Fact Sheet

Mumps

What is mumps disease?

Mumps is a disease caused by a virus. Most people get better from the illness and death from mumps is rare. But mumps can be serious for some people, and they may develop encephalitis (an infection of the brain), meningitis (a swelling of the covering of the brain), arthritis, deafness, and orchitis (swollen testicles). Mumps infection in early pregnancy may cause miscarriage.

What are the symptoms of mumps?

The most common symptom is painful swelling of the glands between the ear and jaw. People with mumps often have fever, muscle aches, tiredness and not want to eat. About 1 in 3 people infected with mumps have very mild or no symptoms.

How is it spread?

Mumps spreads from person to person by drops of fluid from the nose and throat of someone who has the disease (like when they cough or sneeze). The virus can be spread for a few days before symptoms appear and up to 9 days after.

Who is at risk?

Anyone born in or after 1970 who is not vaccinated and who has never had mumps infection is at risk. People born before 1970 likely had mumps when they were young and are protected.

What is the treatment?

There is no treatment for mumps and most people can get better at home. People who get seriously sick should contact their health care provider.

How can mumps be prevented?

- For those born in or after 1970, vaccination is the best way to prevent mumps. Speak with your health care provider to make sure you and your family have completed your mumps vaccination.
- Hand washing is the best way to prevent all types of infection. Hand washing, especially after coughing and sneezing, and before and after caring for a sick person, will help prevent the spread of germs.
- Try not to share food, drinks, cigarettes or eating utensils, and toothbrushes.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your elbow.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Make sure you have all your immunizations before you travel outside of Canada.