

Mumps

Description:

Mumps is an infection of the salivary glands caused by the mumps virus. The most common gland affected is the parotid gland which causes swelling at the angle of the jaw in front of the ear. There has been a marked decline in the number of cases of mumps since the introduction of an effective mumps vaccine.

Symptoms:

One third of people with mumps have no symptoms. When present, symptoms can include swelling of one or more of the salivary glands, high fever, loss of appetite, tiredness and headache. In males, tenderness of the testicles may occur, while females may have some lower abdominal pain. Occasionally serious complications can occur, including inflammation of the brain, spinal cord and pancreas, hearing loss and sterility.

Salivary gland swelling, if present, progresses to a maximum size over a period of 2 to 3 days. The salivary glands return to normal size within a week.

Transmission:

Mumps is spread by direct contact with either saliva or droplets from the sneeze or cough of an infected person. The most infectious period for mumps is usually about 2 days before until 4 days after the onset of the illness, but someone with the disease can be contagious for up to 7 days before until 9 days after the swelling of the salivary gland. People without symptoms can also pass on the disease.

The time from contact with the virus to the development of symptoms is usually about 16 to 18 days, but can be longer.

Treatment:

Usually no treatment is required. Paracetamol will reduce the fever and pain.

Prevention:

There is a safe and effective vaccine for preventing mumps infection.

The mumps vaccination is offered as part of a combined measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine and is recommended for all children at 12 months of age and again at 4 years of age.

Control

Persons with mumps should be excluded from child care, school or work until 5 days after the onset of swelling or until the swelling disappears (whichever is sooner).

Help and Assistance

For further information please contact your local doctor, community health centre, or nearest public health unit.

Other Resources

[Immunise Australia](#)

[Queensland Health Immunisation site](#)

References

Heymann, D. (Ed). *Control of Communicable Diseases Manual, 19th edition*. American Public Health Association: Washington, 2008.

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National Health and Medical Research Council. *The Australian Immunisation Handbook, 9th edition*. National Capital Printing: Canberra, 2008.

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