

Mumps Fact Sheet

What is mumps?

Mumps is an acute viral illness that can be prevented by vaccination. Mumps infection was very common in infants, children and young adults before the vaccine was available in 1969.

Since 2001, Ontario has had an average of 15 mumps cases reported each year. More recently, Ontario has had 28 mumps cases in 2007 linked to the Maritimes outbreak (Nova Scotia and New Brunswick) and two mumps cases in 2008 linked to the Alberta outbreak.

What are the symptoms of mumps?

Fever, headache, muscle aches and pains, tiredness, loss of appetite; followed by painful swelling of one or both salivary glands (located within your cheek, near your jaw line, below your ears) called parotitis. Parotitis may be noticed on one side or both sides of the jaw and usually occurs within the first 2 days. It may appear as an earache or tenderness when touching along the angle of the jaw. Symptoms usually last 10 days.

Up to 20% of persons infected with the mumps virus do not have symptoms, 30% to 40% develop parotitis and about 40% to 50% of infected persons have nonspecific or mainly respiratory symptoms (symptoms similar to a cold).

What are the complications of mumps?

Mumps can cause:

- meningitis (inflammation of the brain and spinal cord with headache or a stiff neck)
- orchitis (swelling of one or both testicles)
- oophoritis (swelling of the ovaries)
- mastitis (swelling of the breasts)
- pancreatitis, and hearing loss/deafness (one-sided and usually permanent)
- spontaneous abortion can occur if infection happens in the first trimester of pregnancy

How is mumps spread?

Mumps is a contagious disease that is spread from person-to-person through direct contact with respiratory secretions like saliva from the mouth of an infected person. When an infected person coughs or sneezes, these droplets enter the nose or mouth of another person. Mumps can also be spread through sharing food, drinks and kissing. The virus can also survive on surfaces. Touching these surfaces and then touching your nose or mouth can also spread the infection.

Can mumps be prevented?

Mumps can be prevented with a vaccine called MMR (a 3-in-one vaccine that provides protection against measles, mumps, and rubella). The vaccine is part of the routine childhood vaccine schedule which is free to all children in Ontario. The first dose of the vaccine is given at 12 months of age and a second dose is now given at 18 months of age. Before 2005, the second dose of MMR was given at 4 to 6 years of age.

People traveling to areas where mumps outbreaks are occurring should follow the recommendations for that area regarding the need for a second dose of mumps-containing vaccine. Postsecondary students and adults who have not had mumps or have never been vaccinated with a mumps-containing vaccine can be vaccinated as well.

Is the mumps vaccine safe and effective?

MMR vaccine gives about 95% protection against mumps. Most children will have no side effects however, mild redness, swelling and pain at the injection site may occur. MMR vaccine can cause a rash and/or fever in some children five to 12 days after the needle is given. This may last for a few days. Allergic reactions to the MMR vaccine and other serious reactions are rare.

The vaccine is safe for household members of people with serious immune system problems and household members of pregnant women. Breastfeeding women can receive the MMR vaccine. You should always discuss the benefits and risks of receiving any vaccine with your health care provider.

Who should not have MMR vaccine?

Anyone who:

- has had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of this vaccine
- is allergic to gelatin or an antibiotic called neomycin
- has a disease that lowers the body's ability to fight infections
- is taking medication that lowers the body's ability to fight infections
- is pregnant If a woman gets the MMR vaccine and then discovers she is pregnant, she should call her health care provider
- is ill with a fever or infection worse than a cold should put off getting the shot until they are well again
- is receiving antibody-containing products (e.g., immune globulin, whole or packed red blood cells) may interfere with the mumps vaccine. MMR vaccine should be given at least two weeks before or at least 3 months following administration of any antibody-containing product
- has documented evidence of previous infection with each of measles, mumps, and rubella
- is certain they have previously been vaccinated with two doses of MMR

Note: Women should consult with their doctor/health care provider before receiving the MMR vaccine if they are trying to become pregnant. Contact your doctor if you discover you are pregnant after getting vaccinated with MMR vaccine.