



PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

Boston Public Health Commission
Communicable Disease Control Division
1010 Massachusetts Avenue
Boston, MA 02118
Phone: 617-534-5611 Fax: 617-534-5905

Mumps

What is mumps?

Mumps is a contagious illness caused by a virus.

How is mumps spread?

The virus that causes mumps lives in a person's nose, mouth and throat. It can be spread through the air when a person coughs or sneezes. Mumps can also be spread by contact with infected secretions. Persons are most contagious 2 days before symptoms begin until 5 days after onset of disease.

What are the symptoms of mumps?

The most common symptoms are a low-grade fever, headache, muscle pain and swelling in the salivary glands (located at the cheek, below the ear and under the jaw). One out of three people with mumps will not have swelling of their salivary glands. Symptoms can appear 12 to 25 days after contact with an infected person (usually 16 to 18 days).

Is mumps dangerous?

Mumps is usually a mild illness, but there can be some complications including meningitis (infection of the covering of the brain and spinal cord), encephalitis (swelling of the brain), and in adult males, swelling of the testicles. Rarely a person could have complications such as hearing loss, arthritis, swelling of the ovaries, breast swelling, heart and kidney trouble. The virus may increase the risk of a miscarriage, especially within the first three months of pregnancy.

Who can get mumps?

Mumps can affect any person of any age who has not had the disease or been immunized against it.

How is mumps diagnosed?

Mumps is often suspected by its symptoms; however, the most common method used to diagnose mumps is a blood test.

Is there a vaccine for mumps?

Yes. Mumps vaccine is recommended for children after 12 months of age with a second dose at 4 to 6 years of age. The mumps vaccine is usually given in combination with measles and rubella vaccine, called MMR (measles-mumps-rubella vaccine). Persons born after 1957 who are unsure if they have had disease or vaccine, should talk with their healthcare provider about getting vaccinated. Those who should not receive the MMR vaccine include pregnant women, those with a weakened immune system and those with a life-threatening allergy to neomycin, gelatin or a previous dose of MMR.

(Continued)

What can be done to stop the spread of mumps?

The best way to prevent mumps is to be vaccinated against it. If you or your child develops symptoms of mumps, consult your health care provider. No one with mumps should go back to childcare, school, work or other public places until 5 days after swelling of the salivary glands began. Those who have been in contact with a person who has mumps should speak to their healthcare provider and have their immunization status evaluated. Person who may have been exposed should be educated on the signs and symptoms of mumps disease and should seek medical attention if any of these symptoms begin.

**For more information, please contact
Boston Public Health Commission
Communicable Disease Control
(617) 534-5611 or www.bphc.org**