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**PUBLIC HEALTH
EPIDEMIOLOGY & ASSESSMENT**

Frequently Asked Questions About Mumps

*Modified from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) National Immunization Program (NIP)
website <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/mumps/default.htm>, accessed 3/23/09*

What is mumps?

Mumps is an acute infection caused by the mumps virus.

Who can get mumps?

Anyone who is not immune from either previous mumps infection or from vaccination can get mumps. Before the routine vaccination program was introduced in the United States, mumps was a common illness in infants, children and young adults. Because most people have now been vaccinated, mumps is a rare disease in the United States.

What are the symptoms of mumps?

15%-20% of people with mumps have no symptoms. The most common symptoms, especially in children less than 5 years of age, are nonspecific, such as fever, headache, muscle aches, tiredness and loss of appetite. Sometimes respiratory symptoms, such as a runny nose, occur. 30-40% of cases develop swelling and tenderness of the salivary glands, in particular the parotid glands, which are located in your cheek near your jaw line and below your ears. The swelling can be on one side or both sides.

Are there complications of mumps?

Severe complications are rare. However, mumps can cause:

- Inflammation of the brain and/or tissue covering the brain and spinal cord (encephalitis/meningitis);
- Painful, swollen testicles (orchitis) in 20-30% of males who have reached puberty;
- Inflammation of the ovaries (oophoritis);
- Inflammation of the breasts (mastitis) in about 30% of females who have reached puberty;
- Spontaneous abortion particularly in early pregnancy (miscarriage);
- Hearing loss or deafness, usually permanent.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms most commonly appear 16-18 days after exposure, but this period can range from 12-25 days after the exposure.

How is mumps spread?

Mumps is spread by mucus or droplets from the nose or throat of an infected person, usually when a person coughs or sneezes. Surfaces of items (e.g. toys) can also spread the virus if someone who is sick touches them without washing their hands, and someone else then touches the same surface and then rubs their eyes, mouth, nose etc.

How long is an infected person able to spread the disease?

Mumps virus has been detected in the respiratory secretions of an infected person from 3 days before until 9 days after the start of symptoms. However, people are most infectious in the first 5 days after onset of symptoms of parotitis (swelling of salivary gland near cheek/jaw line). People who are diagnosed with mumps should stay home until 5 days after the start of symptoms of parotitis.

How is mumps diagnosed?

Laboratory testing can be done from a swab of the mouth and a blood sample. A follow-up blood sample may be needed. Occasionally urine is requested as well. Orange County Public Health can assist with the testing at your health care provider's request. Before seeing your health care provider, call ahead and let them know you may have mumps so appropriate measures are taken in the office to prevent infection of others.

What is the treatment for mumps?

There is no specific treatment.

How do I protect myself (my kids/my family)? Is there a vaccine to prevent mumps?

Mumps vaccine (usually given as a combination measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine) is the best way to prevent mumps. Two doses of mumps-containing vaccine are routinely recommended for all children. The first dose is recommended on or after the first birthday; the second is given at 4 - 6 years of age. Most adults who have not been vaccinated should also receive one dose of MMR vaccine; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is currently recommending that adults who work in healthcare or are in a school/university setting, who plan to travel internationally, or who are in a community experiencing a mumps outbreak get two doses. Pregnant women and persons with an impaired immune system should not receive MMR vaccine because it is made from live weakened viruses. Contact your healthcare provider to discuss whether or not you/your child should be vaccinated or call the Orange County Public Health Referral Line at 1-800-564-8448 to find out where you/your child can get vaccinated.

Other things you can do to prevent mumps and other infections is to wash hands well and often with soap, and to teach your children to wash their hands too. Eating utensils should not be shared, and surfaces that are frequently touched (toys, doorknobs, tables, counters, etc) should also be regularly cleaned with soap and water, or with cleaning wipes.

If I was exposed to someone with mumps, what should I do?

Not everyone who is exposed to someone with mumps will get sick. If you have been vaccinated with two doses of mumps vaccine, it is very unlikely that you will get mumps. However, if you haven't been vaccinated, it is possible you could get sick and you should watch for symptoms of mumps (see previous page). Additionally, if you haven't been vaccinated, this is a good time to get mumps vaccine and to make sure that everyone else in your home is also vaccinated. Getting mumps vaccine after being exposed will not reduce the risk of getting ill from this exposure, but will reduce the risk of disease from possible future exposures. If symptoms develop (generally 16-18 days after exposure), you should contact your health care provider and stay home for 5 days after symptoms began. If you need to see your health care provider, call ahead and let them know you may have mumps so appropriate measures are taken in the office to prevent infection of others.