

Mumps

Information Sheet

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What is it?

Mumps is a very infectious virus, that causes painful swelling of the saliva glands on the sides of your face and can cause deafness. Mumps most commonly affects children. Once someone has had mumps, they usually become immune to future infections.



Photo from www.immune.org.nz

What are the signs and symptoms?

- swelling in one or more saliva glands - usually just below the ear, causing the sides of your face and cheeks to puff out.
- pain in the sides of the face where it is swollen
- fever/high temperature
- pain when swallowing
- headache
- muscle aches
- tiredness

Symptoms usually appear within 3 weeks of being exposed to an infected person. A doctor can diagnose mumps and may take some tests. Rarely, adults can get mumps. The symptoms for adults are the same.

How serious is it?

Mumps can be serious. While infected with mumps, many people feel very ill and are unable to eat

because of jaw pain. Most people make a complete recovery and have no long lasting illness.

Males can develop pain or swelling in their testicles, which can make them sterile for life. A protective layer covering the brain and spinal cord can swell, this is known as meningitis. The brain can also swell, this is known as encephalitis and can lead to death or permanent disability. Some people lose their hearing and in rare cases this can be permanent.

Mumps is a notifiable disease under the Health Act. This means your doctor must tell the District Health Board if they think you have it. A nurse will contact you or your family for information to help stop other people from getting mumps.

Who is most at risk?

Anyone unimmunised or not immune to mumps is at risk of getting mumps. Most reported cases of mumps are in children aged 5-9 years.

Teens and adults not immunised with the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine (MMR) are most at risk of having serious complications from mumps.

Getting mumps during the first 3 months of pregnancy can lead to miscarriage.

How could I get infected?

You get infected when you swallow or breathe in the virus. Mumps spreads through saliva or mucus from the mouth, nose, or throat. An infected person can spread the virus to other people by coughing, sneezing or talking, sharing items such as cups, forks or spoons, or touching objects or surfaces with unwashed hands that are then touched by others.

How do I protect myself and others?

Immunisation is the best way to prevent mumps. In New Zealand immunisation is FREE from your doctor or nurse.

A nurse from the District Health Board will contact you if you have had contact with an infected person and explain what you should do to protect yourself and others.

To be fully immunised you need two doses of the MMR vaccine. For children and adolescents 60-70% are protected by one dose, and 80-90% by two doses. To find out if you or a member of your family is fully immunised you can check your Well Child / Tamariki Ora book. You can also ask your doctor or medical centre to help you find out.

To avoid getting mumps:

- regularly wash your hands with soap and dry them thoroughly
- do not share drinks, spoons or forks

To avoid spreading mumps:

- regularly wash your hands with soap and dry them thoroughly
- stay away from others until at least 9 days after you start feeling sick
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and put your used tissue in the rubbish bin. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands
- Do not share drinks, spoons or forks
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as toys, doorknobs, tables, counters

What vaccine will protect me?

The MMR vaccine is the only vaccine in New Zealand to prevent measles, mumps and rubella. MMR is offered to every child as part of standard immunisation at 15 months and 4-5 years of age. Anyone who has no documented history of 2 doses of MMR after the age of 12 months can have this immunisation free from their doctor or nurse.

Will I need to take time off work, school or preschool?

Anyone who has mumps must be kept away from early childhood centres, school or work until 9 days after they start to feel sick.

Unimmunised people who have not had mumps but who have contact with a person with mumps, such as parents and caregivers, should NOT go to school or early childhood centres until 26 days after the person with mumps starts to get swollen glands.

How is it treated?

Because mumps is a virus, it can't be fixed with antibiotics. You can treat the symptoms of mumps while you are sick:

- rest when you feel tired
- talk to your doctor about using pain relievers such as paracetamol
- soothe swollen glands by using ice packs
- drink plenty of water
- eat soft foods such as soup and yoghurt

Immunisation is the best protection.

Where can I get further information?

For further information on mumps please contact your doctor or Hawke's Bay District Health Board (talk to the Population Health team) on (06) 834 1815. You can also phone Healthline on 0800 611 116 at any time of the day or night to speak to a registered nurse.