

Mumps

Mumps, a viral disease caused by the myxo virus, has plagued humans for centuries. Mumps is fairly contagious, but to a lesser degree than diseases such as chickenpox. Mumps normally spreads through the saliva and infects various parts of the body, particularly the parotid salivary glands. These saliva-producing glands are located between the ear and jaw at the rear of each cheek. For mumps sufferers, these glands become swollen and painful to touch. The other most common symptoms of mumps include fever, headache, and loss of appetite. These symptoms are generally not serious, but mumps can result in some serious complications. Approximately 20-30% of infected people do not exhibit any mumps symptoms at all and they are not aware that they even have the disease.

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is an airborne virus, meaning that it is transmitted through the air or through direct contact with infected droplets or saliva, which are expelled from the body when coughing and sneezing. Mumps is results from a virus, and like all viral diseases, antibiotics are ineffective in mumps treatment. In the vast majority of cases, a mumps infection can simply be left to run its course, while the body's immune system fends off the disease. Taking acetaminophen for pain relief and consuming plenty of water is also beneficial. The majority of people recover from mumps in no more than 2-3 weeks.

Once you have had mumps, it is very rare to suffer a recurrence of the disease. This is due to the immunity your body developed while fending off the disease's initial attack. Various other infections, such as swollen salivary glands, may cause mumps-like symptoms which may lead a parent to mistakenly believe that a child has had mumps more than once.

Mumps was a common disease until 1967 when a mumps vaccine was developed. Prior to the widespread utilization of this vaccine, over 200,000 cases of mumps were reported annually in the United States. Since the vaccine's release, there are fewer than 1,000 mumps cases each year and mumps epidemics have become rare. A mumps vaccine can be given that protects only against mumps. However, it is more prevalent for the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine to be administered. The MMR vaccine immunizes the child against all 3 diseases; measles, mumps, and rubella. Normally the initial MMR vaccine is given to children at 12 to 15 months of age. A second dose of MMR is usually administered between 4 and 6 years of age and should be given no later than 11 to 12 years of age.

In

infants and babies, mumps is very uncommon. The majority of mumps infections occur in children from ages 5 to 14. The incidence of mumps infections in young adults has been slowly rising over the preceding 20 years. There are few serious but rare complications that can result from the disease and medical treatment should be obtained if there is any indication that these are occurring.