



Mumps FAQs

What is mumps?

- Mumps is a contagious (spreads easily from person to person) illness that is caused by a virus
- Mumps can be prevented by getting vaccinated
- Mumps can infect people of all ages
- Once you've had mumps, it is unlikely you will get it again

How is mumps spread?

- You become infected when you breathe in droplets of infected saliva or mucus or touch a surface contaminated with the mumps virus
- The virus is spread easily through droplets in the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes
- The virus can also be spread through contact with an infected person's saliva, such as: kissing, sharing food and drinks, sharing cigarettes, or sharing toys

What are the symptoms of mumps?

- Mumps is a virus that causes painful swelling of the cheeks and neck, fever, dry mouth, headache, earache, tiredness, sore muscles, loss of appetite, and trouble talking, chewing, or swallowing
- Symptoms usually last around 7 - 10 days
- Many people who get infected with the mumps virus will have mild symptoms or not be sick at all. However even with mild or no symptoms at all you can still spread the virus to others
- If you have more serious symptoms, such as a stiff neck or a severe headache, painful testicles, or severe belly pain, call your doctor right away

What are the complications of mumps?

- Most people recover fully from mumps within 7 - 10 days with no complications
- In rare cases, there may be severe complications in children or adults including:
 - Temporary or permanent loss of hearing
 - Meningitis (infection of the membrane surrounding the brain)
 - Encephalitis (swelling of the brain)
 - Pain, tenderness and swelling of the testes, ovaries or breasts and in very rare cases may result in sterility (inability to have a baby)
 - If pregnant women get mumps in the first three months of pregnancy they may lose their baby (have a miscarriage)

How is mumps diagnosed?

- Mumps is diagnosed based on your symptoms, possible exposure and your immunization history
- Your health care provider will confirm the diagnosis with a:
 - Physical examination
 - Blood test
 - Swab or saliva sample
 - Urine sample (in some cases)

How is mumps treated?

- There is no cure for mumps
- Infections like mumps that are caused by a virus, cannot be treated with antibiotics so the disease must run its course
- Your healthcare provider may prescribe or recommend medications such as pain killers to help with your symptoms
- You should drink plenty of fluids, get lots of rest and eat soft foods you can tolerate

What should you do if you become ill or think you may have been exposed to mumps?

- If you think you have mumps or have come into contact with someone who has mumps, call your health care provider or public health clinic for direction
- If you are diagnosed with mumps, follow your health care provider's advice. Likely, you will need to stay home to prevent spreading the virus
- You are most contagious from 2 days before the onset of the swelling in your neck and cheeks until 5 days after
- If you are diagnosed with mumps, you can prevent the spread by;
 - Avoid close contact with other household members such as hugging and kissing
 - Avoid sharing drinking glasses or utensils
 - Cover coughs or sneezes with a tissue or forearm
 - Frequently wash your hands

How can we prevent the spread of mumps?

- Immunization with a mumps-containing vaccine is the best way to protect you, your children and your community from getting mumps
- Vaccines that protect against mumps are safe and effective

- Mumps is part of the [MMR](#) (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine and the [MMRV](#) (measles, mumps, rubella and varicella) vaccine
- In the Northwest Territories, vaccines that prevent mumps are free of charge to NWT residents
- Once enough people in the community have either been infected with the disease or are protected through vaccination, the disease can no longer spread from person to person. This is called “herd immunity”

See the [NWT Immunization Schedule](#) for more information

Where can I get more information?

- [Mumps \(Government of Canada\)](#)
- [Mumps Vaccine \(Immunize BC\)](#)
- [Diseases and Vaccines \(Immunize.ca\)](#)
- [Mumps](#)
- [Immunizations/Vaccination](#)