

MUMPS

WHAT IS MUMPS

Mumps is an acute viral illness that causes painful swelling of the salivary glands. It is also known medically as *Epidemic Parotitis*.

WHAT CAUSES MUMPS

The Mumps virus, which is a member of the paramyxovirus group, causes it.

HOW IS IT SPREAD

The virus spreads from an infected person by direct contact, through airborne respiratory secretions and also through inanimate objects contaminated with saliva.

WHAT ARE THE CLINICAL MANIFESTATIONS OF MUMPS

The incubation period is 14-24 days. There may be prodromal symptoms consisting of fever, body aches, headache and a general feeling of being unwell. This is followed by pain and swelling of one or both parotid salivary glands. These glands are responsible for the production of saliva and are located in the region below the ear and the angle of the jaw. The swelling pushes the ear lobule outward and upward. There may be pain on tasting sour items, like lemon juice. The swelling gradually subsides over 3-7 days. The throat may also be red. There is usually moderate fever, which is rarely greater than 104°F. Occasionally, there may a red rash on the trunk – this can be either flat or raised.

WHAT ARE THE COMPLICATIONS OF MUMPS

Mumps has many potential complications.

MENINGOENCEPHALITIS

The most common complication is involvement of the central nervous system, called *mumps meningoencephalitis*. This is seen more often in male patients and usually presents as stiffness of the neck. Most patients will recover completely, but very rarely it can result in death.

ORCHITIS

This is inflammation of the testis and is common in adolescents and adults. It is rare in prepubescent boys. There is fever, chills, headache, nausea and abdominal pain. Both testes may be affected. The testis is swollen and red. It usually lasts for 4 days before subsiding spontaneously. In a small number of patients, fertility may be decreased.

Other complications that are less frequent include *Oophoritis* (inflammation of the ovary), *Pancreatitis* (inflammation of the pancreas), *Nephritis* (inflammation of the kidneys), *Thyroiditis* (inflammation of the thyroid gland), *Myocarditis* (inflammation of the heart), Deafness and Eye complications.

HOW IS MUMPS TREATED

There is no specific treatment against the virus. Supportive care is given, including bed rest if needed, plenty of fluids and pain relievers (such as Paracetamol or Ibuprofen).

Aspirin should not be given to children with a viral infection. The child can eat whatever he is able to chew comfortably (sour and acidic fluids, like lemonade and orange juice will make the pain worse). The illness will subside spontaneously in most cases.

WHAT IS THE PROGNOSIS

The prognosis is generally good. If Orchitis occurs, sterility may follow but is usually not total. The deafness associated with mumps will usually affect only one ear and may be either transient or long lasting.

CAN MUMPS BE PREVENTED

One episode of Mumps usually provides life long immunity.

There is a very effective vaccine available against Mumps. It is part of the MMR vaccine (Measles, Mumps and Rubella). All normal children should receive the vaccine, usually given between 12 and 15 months of age. A booster dose is to be given before entry into school. Children who are immunocompromised should not receive this vaccine.