



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND MENTAL HYGIENE**  
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*Commissioner*

## **Mumps (Infectious Parotitis)**

*What You Need to Know*

### **What is mumps?**

Mumps is a viral illness that affects the salivary glands.

### **Who gets mumps?**

People of any age can get mumps, but in the United States most cases of mumps occur in children between 5 and 19 years of age.

### **How does the mumps virus spread?**

Like influenza, mumps spreads on respiratory droplets that are released when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

### **What are the symptoms of mumps?**

Symptoms include fever, body aches, headaches, and swelling of the salivary glands. The parotid gland, located just below and in front of the ear, is most often affected. About a third of people who contract the mumps virus do not develop symptoms.

### **What should I do if I, or my child, have been exposed to mumps?**

If a person who has not been vaccinated gets infected with mumps, receiving the vaccine will not help prevent disease. If an unvaccinated person is exposed to mumps but does not become infected, the vaccine will help protect the person from future infection.

### **How can a person with mumps avoid spreading it to others?**

- Stay at home for 5 days after symptoms begin; avoid school or work settings.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.

Posters on preventing the spread of germs are available online. See NYC [Health Department posters](#) or CDC [Cover Your Cough poster](#).

### **What complications have been associated with mumps?**

- The mumps virus can infect the central nervous system, but the resulting illness (viral meningitis) is usually not serious. Headache and stiff neck occur in up to 15% of people with mumps.
- Males who are past puberty may experience orchitis, or testicular inflammation. It causes pain, swelling, nausea, vomiting and fever. The affected area may remain tender for weeks. Approximately half of patients with orchitis experience some atrophy of the testicles, but they rarely lose the ability to produce sperm.

- Some women experience inflammation of the ovaries or breasts from mumps.
- Deafness, in one or both ears, occurs in approximately one person out of 20,000 who develops mumps.

**How soon after infection do symptoms occur?**

Symptoms usually occur 14 to 18 days after infection. The lag between infection and illness can be as short as 12 days or as long as 25 days.

**When and for how long can an infected person spread mumps?**

People with mumps are usually contagious from 2 days before to 5 days after they develop symptoms. A person is most contagious just before symptoms appear.

**Does infection with mumps give you immunity?**

Yes, infection provides lifelong immunity to mumps.

**Is there a vaccine for mumps?**

Yes, mumps vaccine is given on or after a child's first birthday. It is usually combined with measles and rubella vaccines in a formulation known as MMR (measles, mumps, rubella). A second dose of mumps vaccine is recommended before children enter school at 4 to 6 years of age. Anyone who has received 2 doses of mumps vaccine is much less likely to develop mumps. For information on where your child can get vaccinated, call 311.

**Should children receive MMR vaccine before they are 12 months old?**

No, MMR vaccination is not recommended before a child's first birthday.

**How quickly does the vaccine have an effect?**

The body usually takes 10 to 14 days to respond to the first dose of mumps vaccine. Full immunity isn't achieved until approximately 7 days after the second dose.

**Is an early second dose of MMR vaccine recommended for children?**

No, except in unusual circumstances. If a child who has received one dose of MMR vaccine is exposed to mumps before receiving a second dose, the Health Department recommends administering the second dose early. The second dose can be safely administered as early as 28 days after the first, but it may not provide immediate protection. Because of a current outbreak of mumps, the Health Department recommends that children living in Brooklyn receive their second dose of MMR vaccine early. The early second dose is valid for school records.

**What should I do if I don't remember getting a mumps vaccine and don't have a vaccination record?**

Adults who do not have records confirming they received two mumps vaccinations should get at least one dose of MMR vaccine. Adults who were born after 1957 and were never vaccinated against mumps should receive two doses of MMR vaccine.

**Where can I find mumps vaccine for myself or my children?**

Contact your doctor or call 311 about the nearest location where you can receive free or low-cost mumps vaccination

**Does a third dose of MMR vaccine have any benefit?**

If an individual does not respond to the first two doses of vaccine, there is no evidence that a third dose will provide any additional protection.

**Is there any danger in giving a third dose?**

No, there is no evidence that having more than two doses of MMR vaccine causes harm. People who are unsure of their vaccination history should receive another dose to ensure they are fully immunized.

**Is the mumps virus circulating in New York City in 2010 different from the usual mumps strain?**

No, the same strain has caused past outbreaks in the United States and the United Kingdom. The current MMR vaccine covers this strain.

**Why are so many cases occurring in vaccinated people?**

Studies suggest that the mumps vaccine is 80% to 90% effective. That means that for every 100 people vaccinated, 80 to 90 of them will be fully protected but 10 to 20 will remain susceptible to the disease. (By comparison, the measles vaccine is about 98% effective.) Though mumps vaccination cannot protect everyone, it greatly reduces the number of people who get sick when exposed to the virus. If a community maintains a high vaccination rate, the risk of exposure declines too. And while vaccination cannot protect everyone from developing mumps, people who get mumps following vaccination may be at lower risk of complications.

**Have mumps outbreaks occurred in vaccinated people before?**

Yes, in 2006 there was an outbreak of mumps in the Midwestern United States. The outbreak occurred predominantly among college students who had already been vaccinated.

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[www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/imm/immum.shtm](http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/imm/immum.shtm)