

Information on Mumps

What is mumps?

- Mumps is an infection caused by the mumps virus.
- Mumps was a common childhood infection prior to the introduction of MMR vaccination.
- Since 2005 there has been an ongoing outbreak of mumps in the UK. Cases are occurring most commonly in young adults (up to age 26) who have not been fully immunised. People in this age group should check with their doctor whether they have completed a course of two doses of MMR vaccination. If not, the course of vaccination should be completed.

What are the symptoms?

- The illness begins with headache and fever. Swelling of the salivary glands on one or both sides of the face usually develops one or two days later. The fever may last up to six days and the swelling may last up to 10 days or more. Up to a third of infected people may have no symptoms.
- In a small proportion of people mumps may cause complications including meningitis, deafness and inflammation of the testes or ovaries and other organs.

How do you catch it?

- You can catch mumps by direct contact with saliva or droplets from the saliva of an infected person. People with mumps are infectious from about one week before until ten days after the onset of swelling.

How is it diagnosed?

- Mumps is usually diagnosed by a saliva (spit) test, a throat swab or a blood test.

Is there any treatment?

- There is no specific treatment for mumps infection.

What should you do if you develop symptoms?

- People who develop symptoms of mumps should not attend work/school/university and advice should be sought from their doctor. If mumps is diagnosed, they should remain off until fully recovered but no less than five days after the onset of parotid swelling. This minimises the risk of spread of infection to others.

Can it be prevented?

- Yes. Giving MMR vaccine can prevent mumps. MMR contains mumps, measles and rubella vaccines. If you did not receive two doses of MMR then the course can be finished at any time.
- Some people may not have received two doses of MMR, but may have received MR (measles/rubella) vaccine in the 1994 school catch-up campaign. The MR vaccine used in this catch-up campaign did not contain a mumps vaccine, and only protected against measles and rubella. These people should have a second dose of MMR to ensure they are adequately protected against mumps. If in doubt, your doctor will be able to confirm which vaccinations you have had in the past.