

# Q&A MUMPS: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

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Mumps is a viral infection that causes people to look like chipmunks with swollen glands in the neck and below the ears. Outbreaks occur on college campuses due to waning immunity from the vaccine. Unfortunately, teens and adults are more likely than children to suffer complications of infection. Teens starting college should have received two doses of mumps vaccine as well as a third dose if an outbreak occurs on their campus.

## Q. What is mumps?

A. Mumps is a highly contagious virus that infects the parotid glands. Although people cannot get mumps from animals, they can infect their dogs with the virus.

## Q. What are the symptoms of mumps?

A. The most well-known symptoms of mumps are puffy cheeks and enlarged glands in the neck and below the ears. Other symptoms include headache, fatigue, jaw pain and body aches. More serious cases of mumps can cause meningitis (inflammation of the brain and spinal cord), encephalitis (inflammation of the brain), or inflammation of the ovaries, pancreas, heart or testicles. Symptoms generally appear 2-3 weeks after infection and can last for up to ten days.

## Q. How is mumps transmitted?

A. Mumps is highly contagious and spreads easily between people. Infected people pass the virus through respiratory droplets, most often by sneezing and coughing, and sometimes, from touching objects contaminated with the saliva of an infected person. People infected with mumps are contagious for about 6 days prior to experiencing symptoms and around 9 days after symptoms begin.

## Q. Is mumps dangerous or life-threatening?

A. Although children are more susceptible to mumps, teens and adults are more likely to experience complications. The testes and ovaries can become swollen (called orchitis and oophoritis, respectively). In rare cases, orchitis can result in infertility. The pancreas, heart, brain and spinal cord can also become inflamed. Rarely, women infected during the first trimester of pregnancy will experience miscarriage. About one in 20,000 people infected with mumps will become deaf.

## Q. How is the mumps vaccine made?

A. The mumps vaccine is a live weakened form of the virus that was grown in chick embryo cells. In the United States, the mumps vaccine is combined with the measles and rubella vaccines in the MMR vaccine.



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## Q. Who should get the mumps vaccine?

A. The MMR vaccine is recommended for children between 12 and 15 months of age with a second dose between 4 and 6 years of age. Adults born after 1957 who have not had mumps or the MMR vaccine should be vaccinated with one or two doses depending on their risk factors. During an outbreak, a third dose of MMR vaccine may be recommended.

## Q. Who should not get the mumps vaccine?

A. People allergic to any component of the vaccine and most people who are immune compromised should not get the MMR vaccine. However, those with HIV should discuss their situation with their healthcare providers. Women who are pregnant should wait until after delivery. Women planning to become pregnant should check their immunity before becoming pregnant.

## Q. Is the mumps vaccine safe?

A. The MMR vaccine is safe. Although uncommon, some side effects of the vaccine include fever, rash, tenderness at the injection site, or joint pain. The MMR vaccine does not cause autism.

## Q. Why is the mumps vaccine combined with the measles and rubella vaccines?

A. The vaccine was combined to reduce the number of shots necessary to protect against all three diseases. Separate vaccines are not currently available in the U.S.

Immunity from mumps vaccine can fade over time, which is why a third dose of MMR vaccine may be recommended during outbreaks.



## Q. Why are mumps outbreaks occurring in the United States?

A. Unlike measles and rubella, immunity to mumps can fade over time. In a study completed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), people who received two doses of the MMR vaccine and were later infected with mumps virus did not develop serious complications of the disease. However, the CDC recommends a third dose of the MMR vaccine for college students during an outbreak.

## Q. If I've been vaccinated, do I need a mumps vaccine booster during an outbreak?

A. Yes, it is likely that you will be requested to get an additional dose of the MMR vaccine during an outbreak, particularly on a college campus.

*This information is provided by the Vaccine Education Center at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. The Center is an educational resource for parents and healthcare professionals and is composed of scientists, physicians, mothers and fathers who are devoted to the study and prevention of infectious diseases. The Vaccine Education Center is funded by endowed chairs from Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. The Center does not receive support from pharmaceutical companies. ©2017 Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, All Rights Reserved. 17011-11-17.*