

Information sheet about pathogens in humans – vaccinations keep you safe!

What is mumps?

Mumps is an infectious disease caused by the mumps virus. The disease is mainly characterized by inflammation and swelling of the parotid glands. Mumps is widespread around the world and can occur at any time of the year and may affect people of any age. Thanks to vaccination, the disease is much less common today than in the past. Nevertheless, mumps still occurs, in particular in unvaccinated persons.

How is mumps transmitted?

From person to person

Mumps viruses are only transmitted between humans. When coughing, sneezing or speaking, the pathogens can spread in small droplets of saliva through the air and be inhaled. Transmission can also take place through direct contact with saliva, for example when kissing. Transmission through objects contaminated with saliva, such as shared tableware, is less common.

What symptoms do the sufferers show?

General symptoms of the disease include fatigue, loss of appetite, headaches, pain in the arms and legs as well as fever. A typical symptom is the painful, inflammatory swelling of the parotid glands. The swelling can occur on one or both sides and usually persists for about three to eight days. The salivary glands in the mandible and/or under the tongue as well as the adjacent lymph nodes may also be enlarged.

In at least one third of the cases, the infection causes no or few symptoms. Especially in children under the age of five, they often only produce symptoms similar to those of a common cold. For this reason, mumps goes undetected in many cases.

The risk of developing **complications** or long-term damage increases with age. Up to ten percent of sufferers develop meningitis, which can manifest itself through a severe headache, neck stiffness and vomiting. A less common complication is inflammation of the brain, which may cause lasting damage such as paralysis and can even have a fatal outcome in isolated cases. One in 20,000 sufferers may experience permanent hearing loss or deafness. Up to one in three male sufferers after puberty develop orchitis as a result of mumps, which manifests itself by another rise in body temperature with severe swelling and tenderness of one or both testicles, and may lead to a limitation to or, in rare cases, a loss of fertility. In women, inflammation of the mammary glands or ovaries is possible. Inflammation of the pancreas may also occur as another complication.

What's the incubation period – and how long are you contagious?

The first symptoms usually appear 16 to 18 days after the infection (sometimes 12 to 25 days). There is a risk of infection one week before to nine days after the swelling of the parotid glands. The risk is highest two days before to four days after the onset of the disease. Affected persons can be contagious even if they show no or few symptoms.

Who is particularly at risk?

Anyone who has never had mumps or is not adequately vaccinated can contract the disease. Even after full vaccination with two doses, mumps can occur in rare cases. The risk of complications is higher in adolescents and adults than it is in children.

What should I do if I fall ill?

- ▶ If you suspect that you have mumps, you should consult your doctor immediately.
- ▶ There is no specific therapy for mumps. Only the symptoms can be treated, for example by using painkillers or antipyretics.
- ▶ In order to protect others from becoming infected, sufferers should limit their contact with other people wherever possible.
- ▶ The regulations set out in the German Protection against Infection Act apply in the case of mumps infections. People diagnosed with or suspected of having mumps are temporarily prohibited from attending or working at community facilities such as schools or nurseries. This also applies to people who share a household where an infection has been diagnosed or is suspected, if they have not yet had the infection or are not fully vaccinated. Affected persons must inform the community facility.
- ▶ Since mumps infections must be reported, both the doctor and community facility will notify the responsible health authority. The responsible health authority or doctor will determine when the affected person may resume attending or working at the community facility.

How can I protect myself?

Vaccination

The Standing Committee on Vaccination (STIKO) at the Robert Koch Institute recommends vaccination against mumps. MMR (measles-mumps-rubella) vaccines are available for this purpose, which also protect against measles and rubella, as well as MMRV vaccines, which additionally contain a component to protect against chickenpox (varicella). A single vaccine against mumps is not available in Germany.

- ▶ A two-stage vaccination is recommended **for children**: The first vaccination should be given at the age of 11 months and the second vaccination at the age of 15 months, but no earlier than 4 weeks after the first vaccination. It is practical for the first MMR vaccination to be given as part of the early screening of children (U6). The first MMR vaccination can already be given from the age of 9 months if the child is to be admitted to a community facility before the age of 11 months.
- ▶ **For children and adolescents who have not been vaccinated**, vaccination should be completed as quickly as possible with two doses of the vaccine at a minimum gap of 4 weeks.
- ▶ **Adults born after 1970 and employed in certain fields of work** should also be vaccinated with two doses of the MMR vaccine. This includes staff in community facilities, in medical facilities, in care facilities, in shared accommodation facilities for refugees, for example, as well as staff in technical, vocational and university institutions.

If you have had contact with a person with mumps and are not vaccinated, you should get an MMR vaccination as a so-called stop-gap vaccination preferably within 3 days.

Where can I get more information?

You can get further advice and information from your local health authority. Since mumps infections must be reported, it has information on the latest situation and a wealth of experience in dealing with the disease.

More (specialist) information is also available online from the Robert Koch Institute (www.rki.de/mumps, www.rki.de/stiko).

For more information on infection control through vaccination, please visit the Federal Centre for Health Education website (www.impfen-info.de).



STEMPEL

Editor:

Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung, Cologne.
All rights reserved.

Drawn up in cooperation with the Bundesverband der Ärztinnen und Ärzte des Öffentlichen Gesundheitsdienstes e.V. and in coordination with the Robert Koch-Institut.

This citizens' information is available for download free on the website www.infektionsschutz.de.