



# Mumps

## What is Mumps?

Mumps is an infectious disease caused by a virus of the *Paramyxovirus* family. Anyone can get mumps if they have not been vaccinated or they have not had it before, although it is most common in children. To be protected from mumps and other infections including measles and rubella, you need to be immunized with 2 doses of the measles, mumps and rubella vaccina (MMRV).

## How common is mumps in Malta?

Mumps is now uncommon in Malta because of the effectiveness of vaccination and high uptake of the vaccine. Cases can however be imported from other countries. Mumps is common in many countries around the world and there have been reports of outbreaks of mumps across Europe.

## How does mumps spread?

Mumps is spread from person to person through the air by infectious droplets when a person coughs, sneezes or talks. You can get mumps by breathing in these droplets or, if droplets have settled on a surface, by touching the surface and then placing your hands near your nose or mouth. People with mumps are infectious for a few days from when the symptoms develop and up to five days after the symptoms begin.

## What are the symptoms of mumps?

Symptoms include:

- Swelling of the glands in front and below the ears which produce saliva (known as parotid glands). Both may be affected, but sometimes one gland is involved. The swelling can cause pain, tenderness, and difficulty swallowing
- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle pains
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Dry mouth
- Mild tummy ache



Fig 1. Child with mumps – characteristic swelling of the left parotid gland<sup>1</sup>

## How long does it take to show signs of mumps after being exposed?

It takes between 12 and 25 days (most commonly 16-18 days) to develop symptoms after being infected. Exposure to the virus and infection may occur days before symptoms start to appear.

## How serious is mumps?

Some people may develop mild symptoms (like a cold) or no symptoms at all and may not be aware they have the disease. Most people recover completely within 15 days. Once you have had mumps,





your body builds up resistance (immunity) to the virus and it is unlikely you will get it again. However, second infections with the virus have rarely been reported.

Mumps can lead to serious and potentially life-threatening complications in some people, especially in adults. These include inflammation of various organs including the testicles (orchitis), ovaries (oophoritis), breasts (mastitis), pancreas (pancreatitis) and brain and its surrounding linings (encephalitis and meningitis)

If mumps affects the genitalia, it can lead to temporary sterility or decreased fertility in men.

### **How can mumps be prevented?**

Mumps can be prevented by having the MMR vaccine. This is given in two doses as part of the National Immunization Programme. The first dose is given when the child is around 13 months old and a second dose at 3-4 years of age.

Adults and older children can be vaccinated at any age if they have not been fully vaccinated before. Ask your family doctor (GP) about having the vaccination.

If you are unsure whether you are immune, contact your GP for a blood test (Mumps IgG) to check for immunity against mumps.

### **How is mumps diagnosed?**

Mumps is diagnosed by a combination of patient symptoms and laboratory tests.

### **Is there a treatment for mumps?**

There is no specific treatment for mumps. People with mumps need bed rest, fluids and control of fever. Patients with complications may need treatment specific to their problem.

### **What should be done if someone is exposed to mumps?**

If you have been in contact with a confirmed case of mumps and you develop symptoms suggestive of mumps or any one of its complications kindly contact your family doctor (GP). While mumps is usually self-limiting, one of the above complications may follow. Moreover, mumps has similar features to other serious types of infection which may need to be reviewed by a medical professional.

Do not go out if you are suspecting an infection with mumps. Wash your hands regularly with soap and water and always use a tissue to cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.

***If you would like further information, please contact the Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Unit (IDCU) on 23266109/6122 Monday to Friday between 8am and 2pm.***

Sources:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/mumps/>  
<https://www.cdc.gov/mumps/about/index.html>

<sup>1</sup>Image: Figure obtained from <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/mumps/> as on 17/11/2022

