

Introduction

Mumps is an acute, self-limited, viral illness. It tends to be most common in the late winter or early spring. However, sporadic outbreaks have occurred throughout the year. The virus is spread through droplets of respiratory secretions, direct contact with infected fluids (saliva, urine), or fomites (objects capable of transmitting infection, such as utensils). It is highly contagious and tends to spread rapidly among susceptible persons in very close quarters. The incubation period is 14-25 days from exposure to the actual onset of symptoms. Persons are considered contagious from approximately three days before through five days after their symptoms begin. Symptoms tend to decrease after one week and generally resolve after ten days.

Symptoms/Complications

Persons with mumps usually start out with nonspecific symptoms such as headaches, body aches, a low grade fever, decreased appetite and fatigue. Usually within 48 hours of these symptoms, parotitis develops. Parotitis is swelling of the parotid gland(s) and tends to cause pain in front of and below the ears. The swelling can occur on one side or both sides and often causes pain when moving the jaw, especially when chewing food. In adult males, the most common complication of mumps is orchitis (swelling of the testicles). Other possible complications include aseptic meningitis and encephalitis. Fortunately, most patients who develop these complications recover fully. Rarer complications include deafness, Guillian-Barre syndrome, transverse myelitis, facial palsy, arthritis and pancreatitis.

Treatment

Due to the viral nature of mumps, treatment focuses on decreasing symptoms.

- Eat soft, bland foods that do not require much chewing. Examples include oatmeal, bananas, pasta, potatoes, eggs, gelatin, cooked vegetables, applesauce and tender cooked meats. Avoid tart drinks and sour foods since they can irritate the swelling and cause pain. Examples of these include orange juice, salad dressing, and pickles.
- Apply heat or cold packs to the cheeks. Some people find warm compresses to be more soothing while others from cold compresses provide more pain relief.
- Use over-the-counter medication such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen to reduce fever and pain.
- Get extra rest and stay well hydrated with plenty of fluids such as water, Sprite, bouillon, milk and popsicles.
- If orchitis develops, treat this with bed rest, ice packs, ibuprofen and provide support to inflamed testicles by wearing tight fitting underwear or an athletic supporter.

Prevention

The best way to reduce the risk of contracting mumps is to be immunized with the mumps vaccine. This can be given in the combined measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine commonly referred to as MMR vaccine. The CDC recommends that all college students have two doses of the MMR vaccine, as two

doses prevent approximately 90% of mumps cases. While receiving the vaccine is not a 100% guarantee against ever getting the mumps, it significantly reduces the risk.

Important Points

If you are diagnosed with mumps, you will be asked by the local Health Department to not attend class and to even return home to recuperate during the time period in which you are contagious (for five days after the symptoms began). Mumps is highly contagious.

Notify your healthcare provider if you have any of the following:

- Swelling that lasts longer than seven days
- Headaches not relieved with medication
- Ongoing fever
- Nausea and vomiting
- Swelling accompanied by redness or warmth
- Decreased hearing
- Neck stiffness
- Pain or swelling in testicles (male)
- Abdominal Pain

Reference

Centers for Disease Control web site: CDC, Mumps Index Page