

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Mumps

The aim of this leaflet is to provide you and your visitors with information regarding mumps, including ways of transmitting the virus, symptoms, treatment and infection control precautions to help limit the spread of this infection.

What is mumps?

Mumps is a viral illness affecting the salivary glands. The virus can spread to glands in the reproductive system, for example testes in men and ovaries in women. The virus can also affect the meninges (the lining of the brain and spinal cord).

It is very contagious and is spread in saliva, the same way as a cold or flu. This means it can be caught from an infected person coughing or sneezing, or from touching infected objects such as door handles.

Mumps is more common in the winter months and spring. However, cases do occur throughout the year. Mumps infection is less common since the introduction of the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine in the UK.

Mumps infection is now most common in children who have not received the vaccine.

It is very unusual for children under one year old to have mumps.

What are the usual symptoms of mumps?

Up to 20% of people who get mumps virus do not display any symptoms at all. In addition, almost 50% may only have very mild symptoms.

Symptoms include:

- Swelling and pain of one or both parotid glands (main salivary glands). These are just below the ears and you cannot normally see or feel them. The salivary glands make saliva which drains into the mouth. Swelling usually lasts four to eight days.
- The mouth may feel dry.
- Pain when chewing or swallowing.
- Slightly raised temperature.
- Headache.
- Loss of appetite.
- Aching muscles.
- Mild abdominal (stomach) pain.

Occasionally other complications occur, for instance testicular swelling (it is extremely rare for this to make a man sterile), ovarian swelling (this can cause lower abdominal pain) and viral meningitis.

What is the incubation time?

This is the length of time between a person being in contact with the infection and having symptoms. The incubation time is two to three weeks but is usually around 18 days.

How is mumps spread?

Mumps is passed on through:

- Breathing in infected droplets of moisture released from the mouth or nose of an infected person when they sneeze or cough.
- Contact with fluids from the mouth or nose of an infected person, from used tissues or when kissing.

What precautions should I take?

If you or someone close to you has mumps you should, as always be very careful with hand hygiene, thoroughly washing hands using a liquid soap or antimicrobial agent. Each member of the family should have their own towel.

Pay particular attention to hand washing after coughing and handling objects soiled with fluids from the infected person's mouth or nose, for example used tissues. Dispose of tissues directly into the bin after use and wash your hands.

Individuals with mumps should stay off school, nursery, college or work and avoid other people as much as possible.

This should be as soon as mumps is suspected and for **nine days from the onset of the parotid gland swelling**.

Can I develop immunity?

The immune system makes antibodies during the infection. These clear the virus and then provide lifelong immunity. It is therefore very rare to have more than one episode of mumps.

The MMR vaccine provides a good protection against measles, mumps and rubella. Two doses are needed to offer full protection.

How is mumps diagnosed?

Mumps is most commonly diagnosed by your symptoms and the type of glands that are enlarged in your body. However, some people have a swab taken from their mouth to obtain saliva. This is sent to the laboratory to confirm the diagnosis.

What is the treatment for mumps?

No drug kills the mumps virus. For most people mumps improves over a week with no long-term problems.

You do not usually need any treatment if your symptoms are mild. If needed, use the following as a guide to easing symptoms until the body's immune system clears the virus:

- Paracetamol or ibuprofen can be beneficial to ease fever and pain.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Fruit juice may stimulate the parotid gland to make more saliva and can cause more pain. Water is best if this occurs.
- A warm flannel held against a painful parotid gland can be soothing.

When to seek medical help

Most people are back to normal within seven to ten days. Seek medical help if you suspect that a complication is developing.

Contact details

If you have any further questions or concerns, please talk to one of your nurses or the Infection Prevention and Control Team, who are available Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm (with an answer phone outside these hours) on telephone 01623 622515, extension 3525/6268.

Further sources of information

- NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions
- Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk
- World Health Organisation: [World Patient Safety Day 2023: Engaging Patients for Patient Safety \(who.int\)](http://WorldPatientSafetyDay2023:EngagingPatientsforPatientSafety(who.int))

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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