

Mumps - Frequently Asked Questions

What is mumps?

Mumps is a highly infectious disease that can spread easily between people.

Someone with mumps can pass on the virus to others from two days before they get any swelling, the day of the swelling, and then five days afterwards – a total of 8 days.

The virus can be passed on through breathing, coughing and sneezing near others, or through contact with infected saliva (e.g. through kissing, or sharing food and drink).

If you've caught mumps you usually become unwell around 12 – 25 days after being in contact with someone who has the virus.

The measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine can help protect you against the virus. This vaccine is free and is given to children at 12 months and 15 months of age. If you aren't sure if you or your child have had the MMR vaccine contact your doctor to check.

What are the symptoms of mumps?

If you have mumps the glands on one or both sides of your face may become swollen and sore, typically around the jaw or cheeks.

Other symptoms can include:

- a fever
- headache
- aching muscles
- being tired
- not wanting to eat

If you or your child has any symptoms of mumps, you should seek medical advice by contacting your doctor. Call ahead before visiting a medical practice so you don't risk passing on the virus to others.

You can also call Healthline for free anytime on 0800 611 116.

If you or your child has mumps you do not need to stay in isolation, but you do need to stay away from places where others are at risk from mumps. You should

also avoid attending sporting and cultural activities, or places where there may be others present who are not immune against mumps (for example, places where there may be babies under 12 months old).

If you have mumps symptoms, what should you do?

Stay home and call your GP or family doctor for advice. Please do not visit a medical centre or hospital without calling first as you may risk passing on the virus to others.

You can also call Healthline for free anytime on 0800 611 116.

If you feel unwell with mumps symptoms it's important to stay home until you've spoken to a health professional.

How serious is mumps?

Most people recover from mumps two weeks after getting symptoms.

There is no specific treatment for mumps. Most people get better on their own within two weeks. Treatment to ease symptoms include:

- bed rest
- plenty of fluids
- paracetamol to reduce pain and fever
- cold compresses held against the swollen glands.

In rare cases mumps may lead to more serious complications, including:

- inflammation of your brain (called encephalitis)
- inflammation of the lining of your brain and spinal cord (called meningitis)
- hearing loss – in most cases this is temporary and will pass, but, in some cases, it can be permanent
- swollen testicles or scrotum (orchitis) – this affects 1 in 5 adult males with mumps and in rare cases cause infertility
- swollen ovaries (which causes a more severe tummy pain) and swollen breasts in girls and women.

People at higher risk of serious illness from mumps

Some people are more at risk of serious illness or health complications if they get mumps. This includes:

- anyone with a chronic illness or a weakened immune system
- children who are too young to receive the first dose of the MMR vaccine

- pregnant women who are not immune.

If you or your family are in one of these groups, it's important you get vaccinated if you can.

Pregnant women and children aged 12 months and younger cannot get vaccinated, however they will be less likely to catch the disease if others in their family get vaccinated.

Immunity to mumps

If you are immune to mumps, you are very unlikely to get the illness. You will be able to attend school, early learning services or university and can go to work, if you come into contact with someone who has the virus.

You are immune to mumps if you:

- were born before 1 Jan 1982 (as it is likely you had mumps as a child)
- have had mumps before
- have had two doses of the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine at 12 months of age or older (or one dose is aged 12 – 15 months)
- have had a blood test which shows you are immune.

If you come into contact with someone who has mumps you may be asked to check your health records to see if you had the MMR vaccine or have had mumps.

Will I need to quarantine if I haven't had two MMR vaccinations?

If you come into contact with someone who has mumps you may be asked to check your health records to see if you had the MMR vaccine or have had mumps.

If you have had two doses of the MMR vaccine (or one dose if aged 12 – 15 months old and it was given a month earlier) or were born before 1 Jan 1982, then you have protection against the virus. You can continue with your normal routine.

If you're born after 1 January 1982 and haven't had mumps before then you will need to check if you are vaccinated. You don't have to stay home in quarantine even if you are not immune or vaccinated, but you will need to avoid places where people might be at risk from mumps.

If you've only had one dose of the MMR vaccine (and are aged over 15 months old) you do not need to quarantine, but do need to take some additional precautions as you aren't fully protected:

- From 12 days after your first exposure to the person with mumps until 14 days you were last exposed, you should stay away from:
 - **healthcare facilities** - if you need to visit a healthcare facility please call ahead to tell them you are a contact and wear a mask.
 - **places where you know there are unvaccinated people or those with low immunity.**
- When you are allowed to return to your day to day activities, you can contact your doctor to arrange a second dose of MMR vaccine. This provides added protection against measles as well as mumps and rubella.

If you develop mumps symptoms

If the glands on one or both sides of your face become swollen and sore, you experience a fever, headache, aching muscles, are tired or without appetite, please call your GP and say you are a mumps contact. They will organise testing for you. Please avoid education services, work and healthcare (except for medical care). Please do not attend sporting or cultural events, or places where there may be people with low immunity or unvaccinated for mumps (babies under 12 months for instance).

What is the infectious period of someone with mumps?

People are infectious from two days before the swelling occurs (this is day 0) and then five days afterwards. This is a period of 8 days when they can pass on the virus to non-immune people.

If you've caught mumps, it usually takes 12–25 days before you get sick.

How does it spread?

Mumps spreads easily amongst people who are not immune. It is passed from person to person through the air by breathing, sneezing or coughing.

Do masks prevent it spreading?

Masks provide some protection against mumps and should be worn when in healthcare facilities.

Do I have to stay home?

People with mumps do not have to isolate at home, but cannot go to school, early learning services, university, work, or sports and cultural activities until five days after the day their swelling appeared. They should only attend healthcare if they need medical attention and should ring first and wear a mask.

Non-immune contacts do not need to go into quarantine at home, but should not go to school, early learning services or university or work. They are required to stay away from healthcare services except for urgent medical attention, and they should ring first and wear a mask. They will need to avoid these places beginning 12 days after their first exposure until 14 days after they were last exposed to someone infectious with mumps.

How can I protect myself and my family against mumps?

The best way to prevent mumps is to be immunised on time, with two free MMR vaccinations. The vaccine is available to anyone born after 1 January 1982, and is routinely given to children at 12 and 15 months old.

Two doses of MMR vaccine protects about 85 percent of people from mumps. A small number of people who have been vaccinated will still catch mumps, but they are less likely to be seriously ill.

Many people aged between 15 and 35 missed out on the MMR vaccine, and therefore could be at risk of getting the virus. If you're in this age range, contact your doctor to check if you need to get vaccinated. The MMR vaccination is free for all children in New Zealand, and all adults over the age of 18 who are eligible for free New Zealand healthcare.

You can get your MMR vaccination at the same time as a COVID-19 vaccination.

I don't know whether I've been immunised or not. What should I do?

If you are unsure whether you're immune or how many vaccine doses you have had contact your doctor. You can also check your own health records, such as your Plunket or Well Child Tamariki Ora book.

If you don't have any record of getting the vaccine speak to your doctor to see if you should get it. There are no risks to having the vaccination again.

For more information

- Information on MMR vaccination is available on the IMAC website <https://www.immune.org.nz/>
- You can also ring Healthline on 0800 611 116 anytime. Interpreters are available.