

Mumps

Mumps is an infection caused by a virus and spread human-to-human via direct contact or by airborne droplets. It is sometimes called infectious parotitis, and it primarily affects the salivary glands. Initial symptoms are typically non-specific, such as headache, malaise and fever, followed within a day by the characteristic swelling of the parotid (salivary) glands.

Mumps is generally a mild childhood disease, most often affecting children between five and nine years old. However, the mumps virus can infect adults as well and when it does, possible complications are more likely to be serious. Complications of mumps can include meningitis (in up to 15% of cases), orchitis and deafness. Very rarely, mumps can cause encephalitis and permanent neurological damage.

Safe and effective vaccines against mumps have been available since the 1960s. The vaccine is most often incorporated into national immunization programmes in a combined measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine. In countries where large-scale immunization against mumps has been implemented, the incidence of the disease has dropped dramatically.

WHO recommends integrating strategies to control mumps with existing high priority goals of measles and rubella control or elimination. Once the decision has been made to include mumps vaccine, the use of combined MMR vaccine is strongly encouraged.