

We have been receiving many questions at the Hocking County Health Department about the current mumps outbreak in Ohio. Here are some of the frequently asked questions we have received so far:

What is mumps?

Mumps is a viral illness that can cause fever, body aches, headaches, fatigue, swelling of the salivary glands or pain with chewing or swallowing. About a third of people who contract the mumps virus do not develop any symptoms.

How does the mumps virus spread?

Mumps is most commonly spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes, and a non-infected person inhales respiratory droplets that contain the virus.

How soon after infection do symptoms occur?

Symptoms usually occur 14 to 18 days after infection. The time between infection and illness can be as short as 12 days or as long as 25 days.

When can mumps be spread?

People with mumps are usually contagious from two days before to five days after they develop symptoms. A person is most contagious just before symptoms appear.

How can a person with mumps avoid spreading it to others?

- Stay at home for five days after symptoms (salivary gland swelling) begins (required by Ohio law OAC 3701-3-13, (P)); avoid school, work, social gatherings, and other public settings.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.

Is there a vaccine to prevent?

Yes, the mumps vaccine is given on or after a child's first birthday. In the United States, it is usually combined with measles and rubella vaccines, together known as MMR (measles, mumps and rubella). A second dose of mumps vaccine is recommended before children enter school (when they are four to six years old.) People who receive two doses of mumps vaccine are much less likely to develop mumps than those who have one dose or none.

Can people who have been vaccinated still get mumps?

Yes, for every 100 people vaccinated, 80 to 90 of them will be fully protected, but 10 to 20 are at risk for the disease. Though mumps vaccination cannot protect everyone, the vaccine greatly lowers the number of people who get sick when exposed to the virus. If a community maintains a high vaccination rate, the risk of exposure declines too. And while vaccination cannot protect everyone from developing mumps, people who get mumps following vaccination are at lower risk of problems.

Do I need a mumps booster?

Adults born before 1957 are likely to have had the mumps disease as a child and are *generally* considered immune to the disease. Adults born between 1958 and 1985 may have only received one dose of the vaccine and may need a second dose. Most individuals born after 1985 have received 2 doses of the MMR vaccine (per public school requirements). If you do not have record of 2 doses of MMR and you have never had the mumps disease, you should talk to your doctor about getting vaccinated.