



MUMPS OUTBREAK IN SOUTH AFRICA

24 May 2023



Dear Member,

What is mumps?

Mumps is an acute viral infection caused by the mumps virus. It is sometimes called 'infectious parotitis', as it causes painful swelling of the parotid and/or salivary glands.



HOW IS MUMPS SPREAD?

Mumps spreads from person to person through droplets of saliva or mucus of an infected person. The virus may also spread indirectly through contact with contaminated surfaces that an infected person may have touched. A person exposed to mumps may develop signs and symptoms 16 - 18 days after exposure to an infected individual (incubation period). People with mumps are usually considered most infectious from up to seven days before and until five days after the onset of inflamed glands. It's therefore recommended that persons with mumps remain in quarantine for five days after the swelling of the parotids begins.



WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF MUMPS?

The initial symptoms of mumps include headache, discomfort, loss of appetite, and fever. This is followed by an earache and characteristic pain and swelling of the parotid gland (located near the ear, behind the jaw), which can occur within a day of the initial symptoms. The affected gland will swell over 2 to 3 days, usually accompanied by severe pain. Most people will have involvement of both parotid glands. The symptoms of pain, fever and tenderness typically resolve soon after the swelling of the parotids stops. The parotid glands take approximately one week to return to their average size.

Inflamed parotid glands occur in 60 - 70% of individuals infected with the virus. Some of the complications of mumps include meningitis, orchitis (inflammation of the testes), oophoritis (inflammation of the ovaries), pancreatitis, meningoencephalitis and deafness. Deafness in one or both ears can become permanent.



WHO IS AT RISK FOR MUMPS?

Mumps is generally a mild childhood disease, primarily affecting children between 5 – 9 years of age. However, younger and older children and adults can become infected with mumps. People who have had mumps are usually protected for life against another mumps infection. However, second occurrences of mumps do rarely occur.



HOW CAN I PREVENT MUMPS?

Safe and effective vaccines against mumps have been available since the 1960s. The 'measles, mumps and rubella' (MMR) vaccine combines live weakened measles, mumps and rubella viruses. It is not part of the Expanded Program for Immunisation (EPI) for South Africa and is, therefore, only available in the private sector. The first dose of MMR should be given to children 12 –15 months of age, and the second dose should be given at 4 – 6 years of age. In some instances, the MMR vaccine can result in swelling of the parotid glands, which can be confused with mumps.



WHAT SHOULD BE DONE IF SOMEONE IS EXPOSED TO A PERSON INFECTED WITH MUMPS?

There is no post-exposure prophylaxis for mumps infection. If a person who has not been vaccinated against mumps or has not had mumps in the past is exposed to someone with an active mumps infection, they can develop the disease.



HOW IS MUMPS TREATED?

There is no cure for mumps; only supportive treatment, such as bed rest and the intake of fluids, is available. However, we strongly suggest you consult your General Practitioner (GP) should you show any of the above symptoms.

Regards,
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