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MUMPS: Frequently Asked Questions

What is mumps?

Mumps is a contagious disease caused by a virus. It spreads easily through coughing and sneezing. There is no treatment for mumps, and it can cause long-term health problems.

What are the symptoms of mumps?

Mumps usually causes the following symptoms for about 7 to 10 days:

- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite (not wanting to eat)
- Swollen glands under the ears or jaw

Some people who get mumps do not have symptoms. Others may feel sick, but will not have swollen glands.

Is it serious?

In most children, mumps is pretty mild. But it can cause serious, lasting problems, including:

- Meningitis (infection of the covering of the brain and spinal cord)
- Deafness (temporary or permanent)
- Encephalitis (swelling of the brain)
- Orchitis (swelling of the testicles) in males who have reached puberty
- Oophoritis (swelling of the ovaries) and/or mastitis (swelling of the breasts) in females who have reached puberty
- In rare cases, mumps is deadly

How does mumps spread?

Mumps spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Mumps can spread before swollen glands appear and for 5 days afterward.

When are you considered exposed to mumps?

People within 3 feet of an infected person who coughs or sneezes are considered exposed unless protected with gloves or a mask.

Prevention

- Stay at home for the first five (5) days after symptoms appear. Do not go to work, school, daycare, athletic practices or social events. Avoid close contact with people you live with, for example, sleep in a separate room if you can.
- Cover your cough or sneeze
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Avoid sharing eating and drinking utensils
- Avoid exchanging saliva with others
- Verify with Student Health your vaccination records for MMR (measles, mumps, rubella)

What can you do if someone in your home has mumps?

If someone in your home (child/adult/roommate) has swelling in their cheek or jaw area, keep them at home and call your healthcare provider. If you go to a healthcare provider's office, wear a mask in the waiting room. Remember, a person is contagious for five days after symptoms appear. **A contagious person should not go to school, work, daycare, athletic practices or social events during this time.**

Is there a vaccine for mumps?

Yes. It is commonly referred to as the measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) shot. The shot is given on or after a child's first birthday, and a second dose is administered before children can enter school (usually between the ages of four and six). You are less likely to get mumps if you have received the MMR shot. Please review the immunization records of everyone in your household, and if you need a MMR shot, contact your healthcare provider or the Cape Girardeau County Public Health Center at 573-335-7846.

Is there any formal recommendation to give a third dose of the MMR shot?

The CDC does provide guidance for a third dose in outbreak situations for some populations. Based on this guidance, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, the Cape Girardeau County Public Health Center and the Southeast Missouri State University Student Health Center recommends that SEMO students get a 3rd MMR vaccine.

Is there any danger in getting a third dose of MMR?

No, it is safe to receive a third dose of the MMR shot.

Does the MMR shot start working right away?

It takes 10-14 days to develop an immune response to the vaccine if it is the first dose. For a second dose, it is approximately seven (7) days. A third dose should develop a response within 48 hours.

Should children under 12 months be given MMR?

No. Giving a MMR shot to children under 12 months of age can actually lower their immunity, especially as they get older. Children under 12 months may have immunity from their mothers, if they are immune.

Why are so many cases occurring in vaccinated students at SEMO?

The mumps component of the MMR vaccine is about 88% effective when a person receives two doses; one dose is about 78% effective. That means in a room of 100 fully vaccinated people, about 80 to 90 of them will be fully protected, but about 10 to 20 people in the room are at risk for developing a case of mumps. Though the mumps vaccination cannot protect everyone, it greatly lowers the risk of getting sick after being exposed. This does not mean the vaccine is not working; in fact, it is working as expected.

What are local public health officials doing about the mumps?

- Closely monitoring any probable and confirmed cases in Cape Girardeau County
- Interviewing sick people to determine if cases are linked to the outbreak at SEMO
- Working with our partners at the CDC, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, as well as local providers, such as SEMO Student Health, to assure that cases around the country and state potentially linked to those in Cape Girardeau County are identified and followed up on
- Providing alerts and guidance to local providers
- Educating the community to prevent mumps from spreading

Where can I find more information about mumps?

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/mumps/>
- Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services: <http://health.mo.gov/living/healthcondiseases/communicable/mumps/index.php>

If you have Symptoms

- Call the Student Health Clinic (573-651-2270) or the Cape Girardeau County Public Health Center (573-335-7846)
- Call your private physician

If you receive a diagnosis of mumps from your physician, please notify the Cape Girardeau County Public Health Center (573-335-7846)