Treatment for mumps

Drinking plenty of fluids may help to relieve the symptoms of mumps.

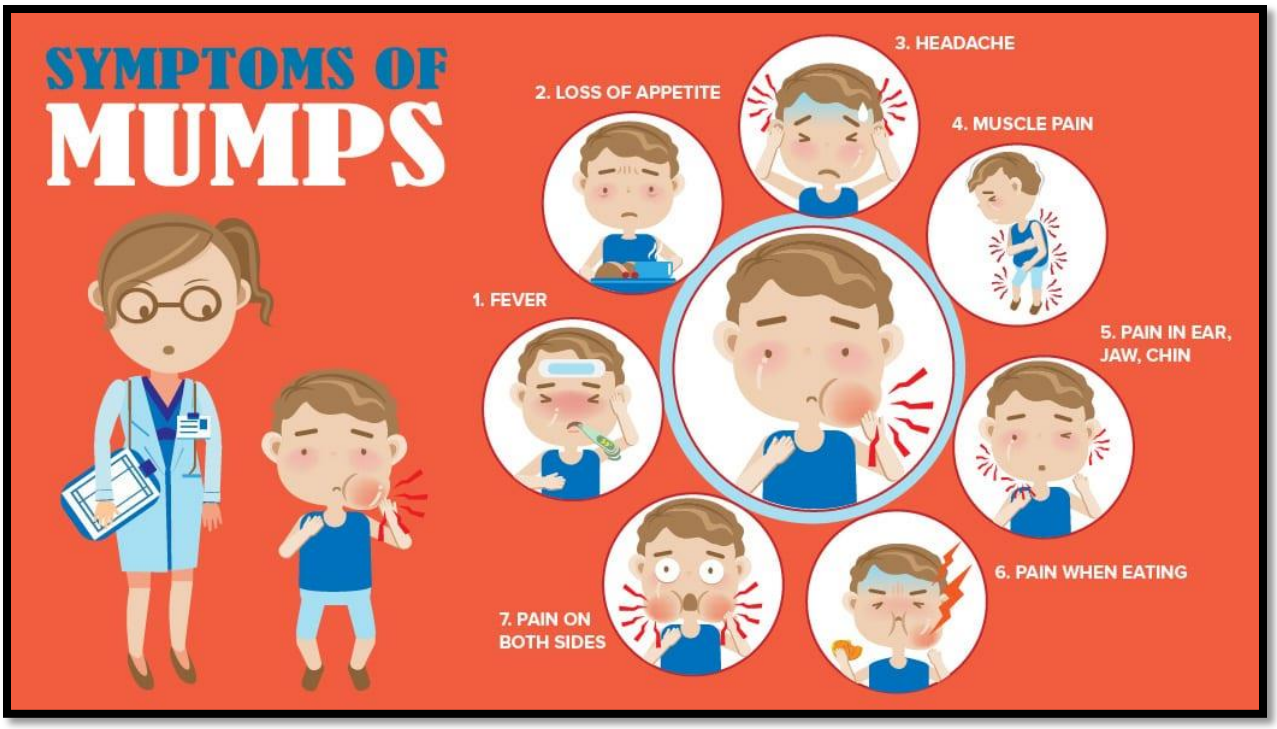
Because mumps is viral, antibiotics cannot be used to treat it, and at present, there are no anti-viral medications that can treat mumps.

Current treatment can only help relieve the symptoms until the infection has run its course and the body has built up an immunity, much like a cold. In most cases, people recover from mumps within 2 weeks.

Some steps can be taken to help relieve the symptoms of mumps:

- Consume plenty of fluids, ideally water - avoid fruit juices as they stimulate the production of saliva, which can be painful.
- Place something cold on the swollen area to alleviate the pain.
- Eat mushy or liquid food as chewing might be painful.
- Get sufficient rest and sleep.
- Gargle warm salt water.

- Take painkillers. Many painkillers are available to purchase over-the-counter or online, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen.



Causes of mumps

Mumps is due to an infection by the mumps virus. It can be transmitted by respiratory secretions (e.g. saliva) from a person already affected with the condition. When contracting mumps, the virus travels from the respiratory tract to the salivary glands and reproduces, causing the glands to swell.

Examples of how mumps can be spread include:

- Sneezing or coughing.
- Using the same cutlery and plates as an infected person.
- Sharing food and drink with someone who is infected.
- Kissing.

- An infected person touching their nose or mouth and then passing it onto a surface that someone else may touch.

Individuals infected with the mumps virus are contagious for approximately 15 days (6 days before the symptoms start to show, and up to 9 days after they start). The mumps virus is part of the paramyxovirus family, a common cause of infection, especially in children.

Complications of mumps

Complications are more frequent in adults than children, the most common are:

- **Orchitis** - testicles swell and become painful, this happens to 1 in 5 adult males with mumps. The swelling normally goes down within 1 week; tenderness can last longer than that. This rarely results in infertility.
- **Oophoritis** - ovaries swell and are painful; it occurs in 1 in 20 adult females. The swelling will subside as the immune system fights off the virus. This rarely results in infertility.
- **Viral meningitis** - this is one of the rarest of the common complications. It happens when the virus spreads through the bloodstream and infects the body's central nervous system (brain and spinal cord).
- **Inflamed pancreas (pancreatitis)** - pain will be experienced in the upper abdomen; this occurs in 1 out of 20 cases and is usually mild.

If a pregnant woman contracts mumps in the first 12-16 weeks of her pregnancy, she will have a slightly increased risk of miscarriage.

Rarer complications of mumps include:

- **Encephalitis** - the brain swells causing neurological issues. In some cases, this can be fatal. This is a very rare risk factor and affects just 1 in 6,000 cases.
- **Hearing loss** - this is the rarest of all the complications affecting just 1 in 15,000.

As rare as some of these complications are, it is important to seek medical advice or help if an individual suspects they or their child, may be developing them.

Tests and diagnosis of mumps

Normally, mumps can be diagnosed by its symptoms alone, especially by examining the facial swelling. A doctor might also:

- Check inside the mouth to see the position of the tonsils - when infected with mumps, a person's tonsils can get pushed to the side.
- Take the patient's temperature.
- Take a sample of blood, urine, or saliva to confirm diagnosis.
- Take a sample of CSF (cerebrospinal fluid) from the spine for testing - this is usually only in severe cases.

Prevention of mumps

The MMR vaccine will prevent mumps, measles, and rubella.

The mumps vaccine is the best method for preventing mumps; it can come on its own or as part of the MMR vaccine. The MMR vaccine also defends the body against rubella and measles. The MMR vaccine is given to an infant when they are just over 1 year old and again, as a booster, just before they start school. Anyone born after the 1990s would most probably have been given the MMR vaccine but, if unsure, it is always good to check with a doctor.

The mumps vaccine is routinely given to children in 82 countries. In many of these countries, encephalitis and deafness related to mumps have nearly disappeared. An adult can be given the MMR at any age; a doctor may advise someone to take the vaccine before traveling abroad to certain regions, including:

- India
- Some parts of Africa
- Southeast Asia
- Japan
- Pakistan

Other reasons someone may be advised to have the MMR vaccine in adulthood is if they are:

- Working in healthcare e.g. hospital or medical facility.
- Working or attending somewhere with lots of young people, such as a college.
- Working in a school or around lots of children.

If suffering from cancer or a disease that lowers the immune system, a doctor would need to be consulted before the MMR vaccine is considered. However, individuals are not advised to have the MMR vaccine if:

- The patient's immune system is seriously compromised.
- The patient has had an allergic reaction to neomycin (a type of antibiotic) or gelatin.

- The patient is pregnant or soon to be pregnant (in the next 4 weeks).

MMR vaccine side effects

Most people given the MMR vaccine do not suffer side effects, and the disease itself cannot be contracted from the vaccine. A small percentage might develop a rash or fever and possibly aches in their joints. Less than one in a million will suffer a severe allergic reaction from the MMR vaccine.

Preventing the spread of mumps

There are a number of precautions that help prevent the spread of infection; these are:

- Washing hands with water and soap frequently.
- Not going into work/school until 5 days after the symptoms start.
- Covering the nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing or coughing.