

Mumps

History

Mumps is one of the viral childhood illnesses, very common before 1970 when the vaccine became widely available. The number of cases rapidly dropped because of the highly effective vaccine that is combined with Measles and Rubella as the MMR. In the past two years, there has been an increase in this disease, especially in late adolescents and young adults. A large epidemic occurred in Iowa and Oklahoma in 2005. Sporadic cases have been reported around the US, and now, several suspected cases have been found on college campuses in Virginia.

Illness

Mumps is a very contagious illness, caused by a virus that inflames the parotid salivary gland beneath the ear lobe with extension onto and below the jaw. Symptoms may include fever, general aches (myalgia), and uncomfortable swallowing for one or two days before this gland swells and becomes tender to touch. Some persons can have mild symptoms without parotid swelling. The virus (a paramyxovirus) is transmitted through direct contact with saliva from a person with the disease or even during a period before symptoms (up to 7 days before). It remains contagious for up to nine days after the initial symptoms begin. It may be possible to contract the virus from sneezes and coughs. Close living situations, such as dormitories, result in high risk of contagiousness.

Prevention

As above, the vaccine is very effective, with about 95% protection if two doses were acquired in childhood. The usual timing is after the first year of age, and again prior to entering kindergarten. However, many if not most, of the cases in the Midwest were in vaccinated individuals, and this remains unexplained. Careful hygiene practices with saliva, coughs and sneezes, AND CAREFUL, FREQUENT HANDWASHING and/or use of hand sanitizers will reduce the spread.

Complications

Multiple organs can become inflamed during or after an infection with the mumps virus, including the testes, ovaries, pancreas, and meninges or brain. All of these complications and the mumps itself, have nearly 100% RECOVERY without specific treatment. There is no anti-viral medication for this illness. Symptom treatment is helpful; acetaminophen or ibuprofen for discomfort, and careful attention to fluids and nutrition.

For more information, please review the NIH information at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/001557.htm> or the Mayo Clinic site, at <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/mumps/DS00125>.

If you think you have symptoms suggesting this illness, contact the University Health Center (568-6178) or your health care provider.



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