

University of Wisconsin-La Crosse

Mumps Disease FAQs

February 2020

Are there cases of mumps being identified at University of Wisconsin-La Crosse? No.

What is mumps? Mumps is a viral illness that affects the salivary glands in the throat.

What are the symptoms of mumps? The disease begins with low-grade fever, headache, muscle pain and general feeling of discomfort. Commonly the cheek and jaw area (salivary glands) typically swell on one or both sides of the face within the first 2 days of illness, this is called parotitis.

How does the mumps virus spread? Mumps spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes, and a non-infected person inhales respiratory droplets that contain the virus; also when an infected person shares items such as cups or eating utensils with a person who is not protected against mumps.

What problems can mumps cause? Mumps can cause complications, especially in adults – they may include:

- Orchitis (swelling of the testicles in males who have reached puberty)
- Meningitis (swelling of the tissue covering the brain and spinal cord)
- Encephalitis (swelling of the brain)
- Oophoritis (swelling of the ovaries) and/or mastitis (swelling of the breasts) in females who have reached puberty
- Loss of hearing

How soon after infection do symptoms occur? Symptoms usually occur 14 to 18 days after infection. However, the time between infection and illness can be as short as 12 days or as long as 25 days.

When are people who have mumps contagious? People with mumps are usually contagious from two days before to five days after the onset of parotitis (swelling of the salivary glands in the throat). A person is most contagious just before symptoms appear.

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

- Reduce contact with others, especially babies and people with weakened immune systems
- Stay home from work or school for 5 days after the salivary glands in your throat begin to swell
- Avoid close contact with people who live in your house
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and throwing the tissue in the trash
- Wash your hands often with soap and water
- Avoid sharing cups or eating utensils
- Disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces

Can mumps be prevented? Yes. Mumps vaccine given in combination with Measles and Rubella (called MMR vaccine) is recommended for all children at 12-15 months of age and at 4-6 years of age. The two doses of vaccine normally provide life-long immunity. Adults born before 1957 are generally considered immune to measles and mumps. All adults born in 1957 or later should have documentation of 1 or more doses of MMR vaccine unless they have a medical contraindication to the vaccine or laboratory evidence of immunity to each of the three diseases.

Where can I get an MMR vaccine if I need one? If you have insurance that covers vaccines, contact your primary care provider or the Student Health Center. If you don't have insurance that covers vaccines, contact the La Crosse County Health Department @ 785-9723.

Does a past infection with mumps make a person immune for life? Yes. A common belief is that if a person gets swelling on only one side of the face he/she can get mumps a second time; this is not true.

Is the mumps vaccine required to attend a WI college or university? No, but it is recommended. In the U.S., the mumps and measles vaccines are usually given together as one MMR vaccine, so most U.S. students have received two doses of a mumps-containing vaccine.

Have you received 2 doses of MMR vaccine? Check with your parents or health care provider.

Can people who have been vaccinated still get mumps? Studies suggest that the mumps vaccine is 80% to 90% effective. That means that for every 100 people vaccinated, 80 to 90 of them will be fully protected, but 10 to 20 are at risk for the disease. (By comparison, the measles vaccine is about 98% to 99% effective.) Though mumps vaccination cannot protect everyone, it 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.

What should I do if I attend University of WI-La Crosse and think I was exposed to mumps? If you had two doses of the mumps vaccine, you are most likely protected from mumps. If you do get mumps and have been vaccinated, you are less likely to develop problems.

If you did not get the vaccine or only got one dose, there is no treatment to prevent infection. If you develop symptoms of mumps that include swelling in your throat, please **stay home** from work, school and sports for five days after the salivary glands in your throat begin to swell.

What should I do if I attend University of WI-La Crosse and think I have symptoms of mumps? If you think you have mumps symptoms, call the Student Health Center at 608-785-8558 for instructions before visiting the Health Center.

Faculty and staff with mumps symptoms should contact their private health care providers.

Where can I get more information about mumps and mumps vaccine?

The Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/mumps/>