

February 18, 2010

State and local health departments, in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continue to investigate a mumps outbreak that began in June, 2009. As of January 29, 2010, several counties in New York and New Jersey reported 1,521 outbreak associated mumps cases. This mumps outbreak is the largest since 2006 and has affected a tradition-observant religious community.

Mumps is a viral infection that affects the parotid glands, one of three pairs of salivary glands, located below and in front of your ears. If you contract the mumps virus, it can cause swelling in one or both of the parotid glands.

Complications of mumps are potentially rare but when they occur they can be serious. However, your odds of contracting mumps aren't very high. Mumps were common until the mumps vaccine was licensed in the 1960's. Since then, the number of mumps cases has dropped dramatically.

The symptoms of mumps vary with each person. About one in five people infected with the mumps virus has no signs or symptoms. When signs and symptoms do develop, they usually appear about two to three weeks after exposure to the virus and may include:

- Swollen, painful salivary glands on one or both sides of your face.
- Pain with chewing or swallowing
- Fever
- Weakness and fatigue

The primary – and best known – sign of mumps is swollen salivary glands that cause the cheeks to puff out. Mumps usually lasts about 10-12 days. It takes about 7 days for the swelling to disappear.

The cause of mumps is the mumps virus, which spreads easily from person to person through infected saliva. If you are not immune, you can contract mumps from breathing in saliva droplets of an infected person who has just sneezed or coughed. You can also contract mumps from sharing utensils or cups with someone who has mumps. Mumps is about as contagious as the flu.

If you suspect you may have mumps, please schedule an appointment with your medical provider or Student Health Services. Mumps has become an uncommon illness so it is possible that your signs and symptoms are caused by another more common condition such as tonsillitis.

Because mumps is caused by a virus, antibiotics are not effective. Like most viral illnesses, a mumps infection must simply run its course.

In general, you are considered immune to mumps if you have previously had the infection or if you have been immunized against mumps, a State Immunization Requirement to attend college in New Jersey.

The best way to prevent the spread of mumps is good hand hygiene! Wash your hands! Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing. Throw your used tissues in the garbage after one use.

Student Health Services is actively monitoring this situation and will keep the community advised.