



VANDERBILT
Student Health Center

Mumps Frequently Asked Questions

What are the symptoms of mumps?

Mumps is a viral illness whose early symptoms typically include fever, headache, and fatigue that are followed by swollen and tender salivary glands (parotid glands) under the ears or jaw and on the cheeks. The symptoms typically appear 2-4 weeks after exposure. Most people with mumps make a full recovery after a few weeks.

How long am I contagious?

Mumps patients are contagious about two days before they have parotid swelling and then for 5 days after the swelling commences.

If I'm diagnosed, how long do I stay on isolation?

Return to school is allowed after 5 days of isolation (dated from the day after the onset of parotid swelling).

How is mumps spread?

Mumps is spread just like other common viruses---through saliva or mucous from the mouth, nose, or throat. An infected person can therefore transmit the infection by coughing, sneezing, sharing items such as cups or beverages, intimate contact, or by touching surfaces with unwashed hands. Multiple U.S. college campuses have seen outbreaks of mumps in the last two years, likely because of the close living and learning communities that exist in the university setting.

How is mumps prevented?

The MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine is highly effective in preventing mumps. While not perfect, people who have received two doses of the MMR are nine times less likely to get mumps than unvaccinated people with the same exposure. Proof of MMR vaccine (or approved medical or religious exemption) is required for registration at Vanderbilt University, so the Student Health Center feels confident the student body is well protected.

If the vaccine is so effective, then how does infection spread among vaccinated students?

Though the vaccine is effective, people who receive two doses of MMR, as required by Vanderbilt and Tennessee state law, can still become ill when exposed to mumps, especially if they have prolonged, close contact with someone who has the disease. Though this vaccine is very good, it does not provide 100% protection.

How can I protect myself?

MMR vaccination is required by Vanderbilt (other than those with medical or religious exemptions) and that is the best line of defense against mumps infection. It's also important to avoid sharing drinks or eating utensils and to wash your hands frequently.

What is being done on campus to prevent the spread of mumps?

Vanderbilt is working with public health officers to monitor this situation very closely. Disinfection of common areas has been increased, and education of the community is one of our best tools in preventing the spread of this infection.

The university is prepared to take the necessary steps to address a larger number of cases, including but not limited to, identifying isolation spaces for ill students and mitigating the impact of isolation, such as providing meals and academic accommodations.

I think I may have mumps, what should I do?

Students who become ill and develop swollen or painful salivary glands under the ears or jaw, or on the cheeks, should schedule an appointment with the Student Health Center by calling 615-322-2427. After hours, students should speak to the on-call provider, who can also be reached at 615-322-2427.

Students with questions or concerns about their individual health concerns can also message their healthcare providers at Student Health using www.myhealthatvanderbilt.com. More general questions or concerns can also be sent to the Student Health email at studenthealth@vanderbilt.edu.