



## **VANDERBILT** **Student Health Center**

### **Mumps Vaccine FAQs**

#### **How is mumps prevented?**

An infected person can transmit the infection by coughing, sneezing, sharing items such as cups or beverages, intimate contact, or by touching surfaces with unwashed hands. Careful attention to hygiene by washing hands and not sharing food or drinks are the first lines of defense in reducing the spread of mumps.

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.

#### **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. All of the Vanderbilt students who have acquired mumps had been appropriately vaccinated in childhood.

#### **I got an email recommending that I get a third MMR---does that mean somebody I know has mumps?**

Public health authorities at the TN Department of Health and the Metropolitan Nashville Health Department have recommended that students at higher risk receive a third MMR vaccine, unless they have health problems that would prevent vaccination. Higher risk students can include students with direct contact with a known mumps patient. Higher risk students can also include contacts of the contacts of those exposed---i.e. two degrees of separation. So, most students who receive an email about a 3<sup>rd</sup> MMR have not had direct contact with a mumps case! Immunization of the contacts of the contacts of a known case is a very aggressive strategy intended to slow and ultimately stop transmission of mumps on our campus.

#### **How do I get the shot?**

You can receive the vaccine at the Student Health Center on a walk-in basis—no appointment is needed to receive the vaccine. The Student Health Center is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. for MMR vaccine administration. Student Health has hired extra staff to assist with MMR vaccination so that the wait times can be minimized.

#### **How much does the MMR cost?**

For students enrolled on the Gallagher Health Insurance plan, there is no cost for the vaccine at Student Health. For those enrolled on private insurance, the price is \$70 for you to receive it at Student Health. You can also receive the vaccine at local walk-in clinics in Nashville, including the CVS Minute Clinic on 21st Avenue or the Vanderbilt Walk-In Clinic in Belle Meade, at 4534 Harding Pike. These retail facilities

should be able to bill your private insurance for you so that you do not have up-front charges for the vaccine; the details of the co-pay required at the time of service will depend on your individual insurance plan. The Student Health Clinic does not bill private insurance companies but can provide you a receipt to file your own insurance claim for the \$70 Student Health charge.

**Can everybody get the MMR? I have a cold, is that OK?**

If you have a routine cold or other infection but do not have a fever, then you can get the MMR vaccine. The healthcare providers at Student Health can help assess your individual situation and advise on the safety of the vaccine based on your symptoms.

Some people should NOT get the MMR vaccine, including pregnant women, or those who are immunosuppressed by medications, cancer or HIV. In addition, the effectiveness of the MMR can be reduced if you've received certain vaccines in the last 28 days. Yellow Fever vaccine and varicella vaccine are the common vaccines that fall in this category. All of these factors will be reviewed at the time that you present for vaccination at the Student Health Center. Students with questions or concerns about their individual health concerns can also message their healthcare providers at Student Health using [www.myhealthatvanderbilt.com](http://www.myhealthatvanderbilt.com) or call 615-322-2427 to speak to a nurse.

**I know somebody who had mumps and that student wasn't even that ill. Why should I worry about this?**

Mumps infection in an immunized person is very mild. In fact, it's estimated that as many as 30% of mumps-infected people show minimal to no symptoms. However, even those with no symptoms or mild symptoms are still infectious. Since mumps can spread rapidly in close-knit university communities, public health authorities do require isolation of mumps patients, even those with mild symptoms. This 5 day isolation period keeps that student out of the academic and social life of the campus, which is a significant burden on that student.

Many universities have experienced wide-spread outbreaks of mumps (100's of cases), which has led to significant impact on campus life, including cancellation of social events. Vanderbilt currently has a small number of cases and is hoping to contain this outbreak so that life on campus is not disrupted.

Most importantly, Vanderbilt University is a community with a diverse staff, students and faculty. Many of those in our midst are chronically ill and are vulnerable to the complications of mumps, which can include meningitis, encephalitis (swelling of brain tissue) and inflammation of the testes or ovaries. As a member of the Vanderbilt University community, we should each commit to doing our best to prevent the spread of this infection.

**Will I be 100% protected from mumps if I get the third MMR dose?**

The third MMR does not offer perfect protection, but does provide some incremental improvement in boosting your immunity to mumps. If you are already infected with the virus but not showing symptoms yet, you will still get mumps despite administration of the third MMR.

**If I was already exposed to mumps, will the third vaccine protect me from getting mumps?**

If you were already exposed to the mumps, your body either had the immunity to fight it off and you won't develop symptoms, or you will eventually get symptoms, somewhere between 12 and 25 days after that exposure. The third MMR will not protect someone who has already been exposed and is infected by the virus. But if you were exposed but not already infected, the additional vaccination can protect you from that next potential exposure.

**Why isn't the whole campus being offered the MMR vaccine?**

The approach to a mumps outbreak management by public health authorities is tiered by the severity of the situation. The first step is to require two doses of MMR (unless there are religious or medical exemptions). The second step is to prevent the spread of the disease with hand washing and hand sanitizer and isolation of known or suspected mumps cases.

The next step in outbreak management is to recommend a third MMR vaccine for higher risk students. The final step if the outbreak persists and grows is to vaccinate all students. In some universities, even after this step is taken, the outbreak has lasted for months. If the CDC recommends mass immunization with a third MMR, our emergency preparedness team is well equipped to launch that initiative and immunize students quickly.