

School Memo re: Mumps

*To: Students, Parents and Staff of Alberta Schools
From the Alberta Medical Officers of Health*

Date: 2017-Feb-21

Outbreaks of mumps in Manitoba and the United States in the past several months are a reminder that vaccine-preventable infections, including mumps, are still a risk to health, including here in Alberta. To reduce the risk to your child, and our communities, we need to ensure as many Albertans as possible are up to date with their mumps immunization. This includes yourself, and your children.

Mumps is a contagious viral infection that can often cause swelling and pain in the jaw (one or both cheeks may look swollen). Some people with mumps won't have gland swelling, and some may feel like they have a bad cold or influenza instead.

Mumps is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes near you or shares food or drinks with you. A person with mumps can spread the virus seven days before and for nine days after symptoms start, though it is most likely to spread the virus one to two days before and five days after symptoms start showing.

Although mumps usually goes away on its own in about 10 days, in some cases, it can cause serious complications that affect the brain (meningitis), the testicles (orchitis), the ovaries (oophoritis), or the pancreas (pancreatitis). These complications can have life-long effects.

Mumps can be prevented through immunization (vaccine).

The MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine, and the MMRV (measles, mumps, rubella, and varicella [chickenpox]) vaccine, both protect against mumps. Most children get these vaccines as part of their routine childhood shots. The first dose is given at age one, and a second dose at age four.

The vaccine is safe, and is also effective. Before the mumps vaccine existed, mumps was a common childhood disease in Canada and the United States.

Protect yourself, and your children:

1. Check your own and your children's immunization records to be sure that you and your children are up to date on your vaccines. Call Health Link (811) if you are unsure how to find or check your immunization records, and/or to learn how to make an appointment for immunization. Mumps-specific recommendations include:
 - Children should receive one dose of vaccine at 12 months of age, and a second dose between four years and six years of age. By the age of six, all Albertan children should have received two doses of mumps-containing vaccine.
 - Adults (18 years of age and older) and born in 1970 or later should have at least one dose of mumps-containing vaccine. (Note: two doses are recommended for post-secondary students of this age and for all healthcare workers)
 - Those born before 1970 are assumed to be immune due to the fact that mumps was extremely common prior to vaccine being available. (Note: one dose is recommended for post-secondary students of this age; two doses are recommended for all healthcare workers).
2. Anyone with symptoms of pain on chewing or swallowing and/or swelling of the cheek or jaw should call Health Link (811) or a doctor to book an assessment and consideration of testing. If you think that you or your child has mumps, be sure to call ahead and explain the symptoms before you go to a doctor's office.
3. Anyone with symptoms as above should stay home from school/work for 5 days from the start of swelling.
4. To prevent spreading infections, always:
 - Practice good hand hygiene – wash hands often with soap and water, or use alcohol hand rub.

- Avoid sharing items that could be contaminated with saliva, such as water bottles, drinking glasses, utensils, etc.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are touched often (e.g. door handles).
- Cover coughs or sneezes with a tissue or a forearm, not your hand.

For more information on routine childhood immunization, and the diseases that these immunization prevent, visit www.immunizealberta.ca.

We thank you for your collaboration in keeping Alberta's children, and our communities, healthy.

Sincerely –

Dr. Albert de Villiers, North Zone Lead Medical Officer of Health
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