

MUMPS

Mumps is an acute infectious disease characterised by inflammation of the salivary glands, especially the parotid gland, and frequently occurs in epidemic form. It chiefly attacks children between the ages of 5 and 15 years, although younger children and adults may be affected. It is rarely fatal, but may cause great distress and disability while the attack lasts. It is commonest in the Winter and Spring.

How Infection is Spread

The infection is caught from a person suffering from, or sickening for, the disease. The infective material is contained in the secretions of the nose and mouth of the patient, even a day or so before he shows signs of the disease, as well as during its course. It is usually spread by direct contact with a patient, occasionally by means of articles, such as a cup or a spoon, contaminated by him. About three weeks usually elapse between exposure to infection and the development of signs and symptoms. The interval may, however, be as short as twelve days or as long as twenty-four.

Signs and Symptoms of Mumps

The onset of the disease usually shows itself by a feeling of chilliness, followed by fever, headache and loss of appetite. There may be pain in or behind an ear, and pain is felt in swallowing. This is followed by swelling and tenderness just below and in front of one or both ears, extending later to the cheek and down the neck behind the angle of the jaw. The swelling is usually greatest on the second day, and begins to subside about the fifth day, disappearing about the tenth day. This swelling is due to inflammation and enlargement of the parotid gland.

Glands in other parts of the body may be affected, especially in adults.

Vomiting and stiffness of the neck may occur during the first few days of the illness.

Care of the Patient

The patient should be promptly isolated and put to bed on the first signs of illness, and children should remain in bed as long as there is any fever and for an additional day. Adults should remain in bed at least a week, preferably ten days, in order to avoid complications.

Warmth applied to the face and neck is comforting, especially a warm cloth tied around the face, or warmth applied by means of a hot-water bottle or hot fomentations. The mouth should be rinsed out at intervals with warm water, the washings, which contain the infective material, being carefully disinfected.

Liquid diet such as thin gruel, broth, and fruit juices should be given during the first few days. Later, semi-solid and solid food may be given as difficulty in swallowing passes off.

How to Avoid Mumps

Do not let a child go near a person suffering from mumps, unless the child has previously had the disease. During an epidemic, avoid fatigue and see that adequate sleep is taken. Avoid, as far as possible, mixing with crowds in cinemas and elsewhere.

One attack of mumps usually protects for life against a second attack.

As soon as the nature of the illness is suspected, the patient should be separated immediately from those in the household who have not had mumps and kept isolated until the swelling has subsided.

Separate eating and drinking utensils should be reserved for the patient, and should be disinfected by boiling or other means after each use.

Discharges from the nose and mouth should be received on cloths, which should be burned or otherwise disinfected.

Each time after attending to the patient the hands of the attendant should be washed and dipped in a disinfectant solution.

Exclusion from School

A child suffering from mumps should be excluded from attendance at school, Sunday school or cinemas until three weeks after the onset of illness or until a doctor certifies that he is not liable to convey infection—minimum period of exclusion, 2 weeks.

Contacts need not be excluded from school.

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR.

Dear Sir,

I have read many *Dawn* books and I think it is a great idea to issue these books to coloured people in Australia.

I am sure they look forward to making many friends.

I am a patient here at Taree Hospital. I have been sick for the last seventeen months. I would be very pleased if you would add my name to the Pen Friend list as I would like to hear from friends in other parts of Australia.

I'd be very pleased if you would send me a copy of *Dawn* each month as it is lonely when you are away from your own people. I'll be here for some time.

Mrs. G. Flores,
c/o. M.R.D.H.,
Taree. N.C.

... Will be happy to send *Dawn* to you, Mrs. Flores, and we feel sure that many readers will write to you.

—Ed.