

Mumps is back!

Often assumed to be a childhood disease, mumps has made a recent comeback among young adults in Canada. Outbreaks have occurred in four provinces, including Ontario.

It is estimated that four out of five young adults born between 1970 and 1991 are not fully protected from mumps. They may have received one mumps vaccination, but in order to be fully immunized, two mumps vaccinations are required.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is implementing a mumps catch-up immunization program in Ontario. Anyone born between 1970 and 1991 (or anyone who knows anyone born between 1970 and 1991) is encouraged to check their immunization record and, if a second mumps shot is needed, to visit their local public health unit or family doctor as soon as possible. Young adults can also visit mumps catch-up immunization clinics being held at university and college campuses across Ontario right through to the end of March.

Mumps is a highly contagious viral illness that can cause serious complications such as meningitis (inflammation of the brain and spinal cord), painful swelling of one or both testicles, swelling of the ovaries, swelling of the breasts, pancreatitis and deafness - which may be permanent.

Symptoms of mumps include fever, headache, muscle aches and pains, tiredness, loss of appetite; followed by painful swelling of one or both salivary glands (located in your cheek, near your jaw line, below your ears). Symptoms usually last up to 10 days.

Mumps is spread through coughing, sneezing, kissing and sharing food or drinks with an infected person. Even touching a surface contaminated by mumps and then touching the nose or mouth can give you the virus. If someone gets the mumps they will have to spend NINE days in isolation. This is the only way to stop the spread of this highly contagious virus.

For more information on the mumps and the on-campus immunization clinics, call 1-866-559-4598 or visit: www.ontario.ca/mumps.