

# WHATCOM COUNTY Health Department

*Leading the community in promoting health  
and preventing disease.*



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Director

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Health Officer

01/27/2017

Dear Parent or Guardian,

The Whatcom County Health Department has been investigating possible cases of mumps in our community. **At this time we do not have any confirmed mumps cases** and are waiting on laboratory testing that should be available next week to determine next steps for protecting our residents.

We are working with Whatcom County school administrators and are asking them to identify students and staff that may need to start or complete a two dose MMR vaccination series or show other proof of immunity. These steps are necessary in order to control outbreaks in school settings.

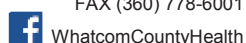
If we do identify a confirmed case of mumps in a school, preschool or childcare setting, we will be notifying exposed individuals who do not have documented vaccinations or immunity to mumps so they are aware of actions that they can take to prevent the spread and protect family members. These individuals may be excluded for days 12 to 25 after an exposure to mumps if we identify an outbreak (defined as 3 or more cases). This is an important part of outbreak control in these settings.

Mumps is a contagious disease caused by the mumps virus and can cause long-term health problems. More information about mumps is on page 2 of this letter.

To protect your child and minimize the chances of your child being excluded from school, preschool or childcare during an outbreak, please make sure your child has completed the number of doses recommended for their age group (1 dose for children 12 months to 4 years of age, a booster at 4-6 years of age and 2 doses for school-aged children).

Because vaccination reduces the risk of mumps and its complications, but does not always prevent disease, people who have been vaccinated may still develop mumps. Therefore, **regardless of your child's vaccination status against mumps**, please watch for symptoms especially if you have been notified of a possible exposure. If your child experiences mumps symptoms, please contact your healthcare provider. Keep your child home and away from other persons and from public settings until a health care provider has evaluated him or her. If your health care provider has any questions, please have them call the Whatcom County Health Department at 360-778-6100.

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**PUBLIC HEALTH**  
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HEALTHIER WHATCOM COUNTY  
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WhatcomCoHealth

## **Information on mumps:**

**What are the symptoms?** Symptoms typically include fever, headache, and swelling of the cheeks and jaw. In rare cases, mumps can lead to more serious complications that may require hospitalization. Up to 30% of people with mumps infection will have no symptoms.

**How is it spread?** A person with mumps can spread the virus by coughing, sneezing, or talking. It can also be spread by sharing cups or eating utensils. It usually takes 12-25 days after becoming infected before symptoms appear.

**Who is at risk?** Infants who are too young to get the mumps vaccine (under 1 year). Children over 1 year of age who have not received at least 1 dose of MMR. Adults born in or after 1957 who have not been vaccinated or have not previously had mumps.

**When is a person contagious?** Those infected with mumps are usually contagious a few days before symptoms appear and for a few days after.

**How is it treated?** There is no treatment for mumps. Symptoms generally last 7-10 days.

**What are we asking you to do?** Make sure that you and the other members of your family are fully immunized against mumps.

The MMR vaccine is not perfect but it is the best protection we have. 2 doses of MMR vaccine is 88% effective, 12% are still vulnerable to mumps.

Please monitor your child for symptoms of mumps. If any symptoms develop, keep your child home from childcare/school, do not go to any public places, and call your health care provider and inform them of your child's symptoms and that he/she may have been exposed to mumps.

Follow infection prevention practices such as hand washing, covering your cough, and cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces.

If you have additional questions you may contact a Public Health Nurse in the Communicable Disease program at the Whatcom County Health Department by calling 360-778-6100.