

NEWS RELEASE
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Health Department investigating mumps cases in Douglas County

The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment have identified one case of mumps in Lawrence. Since mid-December, they also have investigated nine individuals who exhibited mumps-like symptoms, but the illnesses were not confirmed by a laboratory test. All of the individuals investigated are University of Kansas students.

Mumps is a contagious disease caused by a virus. It spreads through saliva or mucus from the mouth, nose or throat. An infected person can spread the virus by:

- coughing or sneezing,
- kissing,
- sharing items such drinks, cigarettes, chapstick or eating utensils, and
- touching objects or surfaces with unwashed hands that are touched by others.

The disease typically starts with a few days of fever, headache, muscle aches, tiredness and loss of appetite, followed by swollen and tender salivary glands. An individual typically is contagious three days before swelling to five days after.

If residents suspect they have mumps, they should contact their health care provider or the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department at 785-843-3060. They also should stay home from school or work and limit close contact with others for five days after onset of symptoms.

There is no treatment for mumps; however, vaccination can help prevent it or lessen the severity of illness. The MMR (mumps, measles and rubella) vaccine prevents most, but not all, cases of mumps.

Large outbreaks of mumps have occurred in many states this year, including the nearby states of Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa and Illinois. The outbreaks have involved universities, where the campus environment can be a major contributing factor because students tend to be in close contact with each other.

Sonia Jordan, Communicable Disease coordinator at the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department, encourages residents to practice good health habits such as hand-washing and staying home when sick to help prevent spread of disease. "If you suspect you have mumps, please call your health care provider and stay home from work, school and other social activities," she said.