



INSTRUCTION SHEET: SALIVARY GLAND INFECTIONS (Parotitis; Sialadenitis)

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed salivary gland infections. Salivary gland infections are viral or bacterial infections of the saliva-producing glands.

There are three pairs of major salivary glands.

- The two largest are the parotid glands, one in each cheek over the jaw in front of the ears. Inflammation of one or more of these glands is called parotitis, or parotiditis.
- Two submandibular glands are at the back of the mouth on both sides of the jaw.
- Two sublingual glands are under the floor of the mouth.

All of the salivary glands empty saliva into the mouth through ducts that open at various locations in the mouth.

Causes, incidence, and risk factors

- Salivary gland infections are somewhat common.
- Viral infections such as [mumps](#) often affect the salivary glands (mumps most often causes parotiditis). This type of infection is now considerably rare in children because of the [MMR vaccine](#).
- Bacterial infections usually result from obstruction (such as [salivary duct stones](#)) or poor [oral hygiene](#). They can be seen in people who are dehydrated and hospitalized.

Symptoms

- [Abnormal tastes](#), foul tastes
- Decreased ability to open the mouth
- Dry mouth
- [Fever](#)
- Mouth or [facial pain](#), especially when eating
- Redness over the side of the face or the upper neck
- [Swelling of the face](#) (particularly in front of the ears, below the jaw, or on the floor of the mouth)

Signs and tests

An examination by the health care provider or dentist shows enlarged salivary glands. Pus may drain into the mouth. The gland may be painful, particularly with bacterial infections. Viral infections such as mumps may cause painless swelling of the glands. A CT scan or ultrasound may be done if the doctor suspects an abscess.

Treatment

1. In some cases, no treatment is necessary.
2. If there is pus or a fever, or if the infection is known or thought to be bacterial, antibiotics may be prescribed. Antibiotics are not effective against viral infections.
3. If there is an abscess, surgical drainage or aspiration may be done.
4. Good oral hygiene, with thorough tooth brushing and flossing at least twice per day, may aid healing and help prevent an infection from spreading. If you are a smoker, stop smoking as it helps in recovery.
5. Warm salt water rinses (1/2 teaspoon of salt in one cup of water) may be soothing and keep the mouth moist.
6. Drink lots of water and use sugar-free lemon drops to increase the flow of saliva and reduce swelling. Massaging the gland with heat may help.

Expectations (prognosis)

Most salivary gland infections go away on their own or are cured with treatment. Complications are not common, but they may occur.