

Mumps in Maine came from Canada

December 21 2007

An outbreak of mumps in Maine appears to be a Canadian import.

About 75 cases have been reported in Maine since September, with the disease affecting both children and adults, The Boston Globe reported. Mumps, once a common childhood disease in the United States, had not been seen in the state for 20 years.

More than 1,100 people have become sick in Canada this year, mostly in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Massachusetts health officials fear that the disease will continue to move south, especially because many of the victims are mobile college students.

A vaccine for mumps became available in the 1960s. Canada and the United States came close to eliminating the disease, but mumps remains endemic in much of the rest of the world.

"Mumps has undoubtedly been with us for millennia, and it's not likely to disappear just because we develop an effective vaccine," Dr. Kenneth McIntosh, a disease specialist at Children's Hospital Boston, told the Globe.

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