

Mononucleosis

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Mononucleosis is often called mono. It is a viral infection caused by the Epstein-Barr virus.

Symptoms include:

- * sore throat
- * swollen lymph nodes
- * headache
- * fever
- * “flu-like symptoms
- * occasionally a rash
- * tiredness

NOTE: Sometimes the liver and spleen are affected

Symptoms usually decrease 6-10 days after onset but may last for several weeks. Like most viruses, not everyone who is in contact with an infected person will get sick----about 50%.

How is it spread?

Mono is spread by person-to person contact through nose and throat secretions. Frequently referred to as the “kissing disease” because a person can catch it from the saliva of someone who has the virus, mono can also be contracted by sharing a toothbrush, drinking straw, or eating utensil with someone who has the virus. Don’t worry about giving your friends or family a quick peck- it takes more than that to catch it.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms appear from four to six weeks after exposure. When the symptoms begin, expect a fever, sore muscles, headache, sore throat, and loss of appetite. Two indicators that a person may have something more than the flu are being tired all the time and having swollen lymph nodes (glands) in your neck, under your arms, and around your groin. Some people also have an enlarged liver or spleen. A blood test can help your doctor determine whether you have mono or not. Other viruses and some bacterial infections- such as strep- may cause similar symptoms.

What is the Treatment?

Mono can’t be cured. It needs to run its course naturally over about 2 to 4 weeks- and some people feel tired for several weeks longer. Things a person can do to feel better are:

- get plenty of **rest**
- drink lots of liquids, such as water, juice, soup broth, and tea, and try to **eat a well-balanced diet.**
- you can take non aspirin pain relievers, such as Tylenol or Advil, which will help your headaches and sore muscles while reducing your fever. (do not take products containing aspirin, as they may cause Reye syndrome, a serious and sometimes fatal disease).

How long is someone with the disease infectious?

Physicians and researchers are not exactly sure. A person can spread the infection for the entire time that they have symptoms. The virus is shed in the throat during the illness. After the initial infection, the virus tends to become dormant for a prolonged period of time- up to a year or more.

Can a person get infectious mononucleosis again?

People who get the illness rarely get it again. Centre's for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) state that people who have already been infected with the virus that causes mono- will develop immunity that protects them from further infection. According to the CDC, an estimated 95% of adults have been infected with the virus and 50% of children have been infected before the age 5. So, an individual might not even know if they have had it.

What can a person do to minimize the spread of infectious mononucleosis?

GOOD HYGIENE is the best prevention. This includes:

- good handwashing
- not sharing cups, pop cans etc.
- cover mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing and washing hands after

Health professionals recommend avoiding activities involving the transfer of body fluids (commonly saliva) with someone who is currently or recently infected with the disease.

Resources:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/ebv.htm>

Smeltzer, Suzanne C., and Bare, Brenda G., Brunner & Suddarth's Textbook of Medical Surgical Nursing 10th edition, 2004.

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact the Health Services at Mount Allison University at 364-2163 to meet with the Nurse/Educator.