

What is infectious mononucleosis?

Infectious mononucleosis, also known as mono, is a viral disease that affects certain blood cells. It is caused by the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), which is a member of the herpes virus family. Most cases occur sporadically and outbreaks are rare.

Who is at risk for mono?

While most people are exposed to EBV sometime in their lives, very few develop the symptoms of infectious mononucleosis. Infections in the United States are most common in group settings of adolescents, such as in educational institutions. Young children usually have only mild or no symptoms.

What are the symptoms of mono?

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Severe fatigue
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Enlarged liver and spleen
- Occasional rash in those treated with ampicillin, amoxicillin or other penicillins

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms appear from 30 to 50 days after infection.

How is mono spread?

The virus is spread by close person-to-person contact via saliva (on hands or toys or by kissing). In rare instances, the virus has been transmitted by blood transfusion or following organ transplant.

When and for how long is a person able to spread the disease?

The virus is shed in the throat during the illness and for up to a year after infection. After the initial infection, the virus tends to become dormant for a prolonged period and can later reactivate and be shed from the throat again.

How is a person diagnosed?

Laboratory tests are available. A health care professional should be consulted.

What is the treatment?

No treatment other than rest is needed in the vast majority of cases. Health care providers may prescribe supportive treatment. Due to the risk of rupture of the spleen, contact sports should be avoided until clearance has been given by a physician.

Does past infection make a person immune?

Yes. Once someone is infected with EBV, he or she is immune.

Should children or others be excluded from child care, school, work or other activities if they have infectious mononucleosis?

No, unless he or she is unable to participate and the staff determines they cannot care for the child without compromising their ability to care for the safety and health of the other children in the group.

However, contact sports should be avoided for the first three weeks of symptoms onset; if the spleen is enlarged, then contact sports should also be avoided until the spleen is no longer enlarged.

What can be done to prevent the spread of infectious mononucleosis disease?

- Clean and sanitize toys and utensils before they are shared.
- Avoid kissing on the mouth.
- Wash hands often.

Additional Information:

Additional information is available at www.ndhealth.gov/disease or by calling the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180.

Resource:

American Academy of Pediatrics. [Epstein-Barr Virus Infections]. In: Kimberlin DW, Brady MT, Jackson MA, Long SS, eds. *Red Book: 2015 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases*. 30th ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2015: 336-340.