

MONONUCLEOSIS (MONO)

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Mono is a viral disease caused most often by a virus called “Epstein-Barr (EBV). It is contagious, although less so than the common cold. Most persons infected in infancy and childhood show no symptoms at all or may only have a mild cough or cold. Thirty to forty percent of children by age six have antibodies (showing past infection) to EBV. Active cases are more commonly seen in older children, teens and young adults.

The incubation period (time between when a person is exposed to someone infected and when they develop symptoms): 4–6 weeks.

Mode of transmission/prevention—The virus is primarily spread by saliva. Teens and young adults can help prevent infection by avoiding kissing, sharing common drinking vessels, cigarettes, lipsticks, all common methods of spreading the virus. Prolonged presence of virus in the saliva of an infected person can remain for up to 12 months after infection.

SYMPTOMS

- **Sore throat:** Occurs during the first week of illness and is present in 80 percent of cases.
- **White patches in throat**
- **Fever:** temperature elevations of 102° F or higher, can last for about 10 days and then gradually fall over an additional 7–10 days.

- **Fatigue, muscle ache, weakness and headache:** In some patients, low-grade fever and malaise (general feelings of illness) may last several weeks to months after acute illness.
- **Enlarged lymph nodes:** development of generalized enlarged lymph nodes is common.
- **Enlarged Spleen:** About half of those infected will develop an enlarged spleen.
- **Other less common symptoms:** Enlarged tender liver, skin rash and inflammation of the lungs (causing chest discomfort).

Treatment—There is no specific treatment for mono. Doctors recommend bed rest during active stage. Persons who are infectious (able to spread the virus to others) are not routinely excluded from school due to the long period of infectiousness and low rate of communicability. If persons are symptomatic we encourage them to stay home from school. Diagnosis is made by laboratory tests. There is currently no vaccine available to prevent EBV.

Symptoms requiring medical attention include: unusually painful sore throat, breathing or swallowing difficulties; your doctor may perform a throat culture for strep infection which is fairly common with mono and can be treated with antibiotics. **A sudden, sharp, severe pain in the upper abdomen, although this is rare, maybe a symptom of a ruptured spleen, go to the hospital or call 911.**