

MONONUCLEOSIS

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is Mononucleosis?

Mononucleosis or “Mono” is caused by a common virus, and occurs primarily in adolescents and young adults. Infected individuals experience fatigue, fever, and a general feeling of malaise and lethargy. As many as 95% of U.S. adults have been infected with the virus.

How is it spread?

Mono is mildly contagious and is usually spread through direct mouth contact. Symptoms from infection with this virus can occur up to six weeks after exposure. Transmission is almost impossible to prevent since the virus is also found frequently in the saliva of healthy people.

How is it treated?

Mono is not treated with antibiotics because it is caused by a virus. Occasionally steroids are prescribed to control the swelling of the throat and tonsils. To help speed recovery it is important to get adequate rest, eat a balanced diet, drink at least 8 glasses of water/juice a day, and limit physical activity. Symptoms usually resolve within 1-2 months.

How can we prevent Mono?

- Mono is spread through saliva—which brings truth to the nickname the “kissing disease.” Avoid all oral contact including kissing and drinking from or using the same utensils as individuals who have the symptoms of mono.
- Always remember to use general good hygiene measures including hand washing.

Are there any serious complications?

- Heart problems or involvement of the nervous system occur only rarely, and mono is almost never fatal.
- There are no known risks to an unborn baby of a mother who is infected.
- Very rarely, 2 forms of cancer are associated with carriers of the virus. These cancers are uncommon in the U.S.
- Spleen or liver enlargement may increase the risk of trauma to these organs while playing contact sports such as football.

SYMPTOMS OF MONONUCLEOSIS

- Sore throat
- Loss of appetite
- Headaches
- Fever
- Fatigue
- Swollen glands
- Muscle aches
- Skin rash
- Spleen enlarged
- Liver enlarged
- General feeling of tiredness

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