



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Infectious mononucleosis is a viral illness that affects the lungs, liver, and lymphatic system. It usually occurs in children and young adults (from ages 12 to 40).

FREQUENT SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Young children may have mild or no symptoms.
- Fever.
- Sore throat (sometimes severe).
- Appetite loss.
- Fatigue.
- Swollen lymph glands, usually in the neck, underarms, or groin.
- Enlarged spleen may cause pain in abdomen.
- Headache.
- General aching.

CAUSES

Epstein-Barr virus (EBV) is the primary cause. The germs are spread in saliva and can be passed from person to person by close contact, such as kissing or sharing food. The incubation time can range from 2 to 6 weeks. Almost everyone will have been infected by EBV by adulthood, but not all infected persons will get infectious mononucleosis.

RISK INCREASES WITH

Close contact with saliva from an infected person.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

If you are in close contact with an infected person, don't kiss, don't share food or eating utensils or straws, don't share lip gloss or lipstick, don't share toothbrush.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

It usually clears up on its own in 10 days to 6 months. Fatigue usually lasts for 3 to 6 weeks after other symptoms get better. A few patients have a chronic form in which symptoms last for months or years.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Small risk for ruptured spleen, resulting in emergency surgery.
- In rare cases, the heart, lungs, or central nervous system could become involved. The disease can prove serious, even fatal.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do a physical exam and ask questions about your symptoms. Medical tests may include blood studies.
- No specific cure or treatment is available. Extra rest and healthy diet are important.
- There is no need to keep away from other people. Do not kiss or share any item that may have saliva on it.
- To relieve the sore throat, gargle frequently with warm or cold double-strength tea or warm salt water (mix one-half teaspoon of salt in one cup of water).

MEDICATIONS

- For minor pain, you may use nonprescription drugs such as acetaminophen. Don't use aspirin in children under age 18.
- If symptoms are severe, you may be prescribed a short course of cortisone drugs.
- Avoid penicillin, amoxicillin, or ampicillin as they can cause a rash in mononucleosis patients.

ACTIVITY

- Rest in bed while you have fever. Resume normal activities gradually. Rest when you are tired.
- Don't join in contact sports until at least 1 month after complete recovery.

DIET

No special diet. You may not feel like eating while you are ill. Eat soft foods or drink milk shakes. Drink plenty of fluids each day (especially with a fever).



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of infectious mononucleosis.
- The following occur during treatment:
 - Symptoms don't improve in a week or two.
 - Fever over 102°F (38.9°C).
 - Constipation, which may cause straining.
 - Severe pain in the upper left abdomen (rupture of the spleen is a medical emergency!).
 - Yellowing of the skin.
 - Difficulty swallowing or breathing due to severe sore throat.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page