

Infectious Mononeucleosis **(Mono, kissing disease)**

General Information:

Infectious mononeucleosis is a common infection of childhood characterized by fever, fatigue, sore throat and swollen lymph glands. It is caused by the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV) which is related to the viruses that cause chickenpox and fever blisters.

EBV spreads from one person to another when infected saliva comes in contact with the mouth and, possibly, the nose or eyes. Although kissing is one way to catch mononeucleosis, the virus can also be passed on cups, utensils or other objects, as well as in droplets coughed or sneezed into the air. It is believed that anyone who has been infected with EBV will continue to shed virus into the saliva for life.

The time between exposure to infectious mono and the first signs of illness is usually 4 to 7 weeks.

The Illness:

Most young children who become infected with EBV either remain perfectly well or have only a slight cold. Teenagers and young adults, on the other hand, are more likely to develop infectious mononeucleosis.

A typical case of “mono” begins with weakness and fatigue, sore throat, fever and lack of appetite. Tonsils may be fiery red, swollen and covered with pus. When excessively large and painful they can interfere with swallowing and breathing. Lymph glands all over the body, but particularly in the neck, are enlarged as are organs in the abdomen such as the liver and spleen. A blotchy red rash appears in some cases. Complications are uncommon.

Illness lasts 2 or 3 weeks. Some individuals remain weak and tire easily for several months.

When to Call the Doctor:

You should call our office if you feel frightened or worried about the illness. Call our office immediately if you see unexplained bruises or bleeding or if you have difficult or very rapid breathing.

Call us during regular office hours (or on weekends) if there occurs an inability to swallow liquids for 12 hours or more; extreme weakness; severe headache; unusual behavior; severe or persistent stomachache; yellow color to the skin (jaundice) or dark urine; or if symptoms last for longer than 3 weeks.

Treatment:

No specific treatment is available for infectious mononeucleosis. For relief of pain and temperature over 102°F (38.9°C) it is helpful to give acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin). If you feel that stronger medication is needed, speak with your doctor.

Fatigue and weakness are best treated by resting. A diet containing nutritious foods and plenty of fluids should be offered. Cold milk shakes containing vitamin-mineral-calorie supplements, such as Instant Breakfast, are well-suited for this purpose.

Your doctor may prescribe medication or recommend hospitalization for severe illness, dehydration or a complicating problem.