

Mononucleosis

FACTSHEET

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What is Strep Mononucleosis?

Epstein-Barr virus, frequently referred to as EBV, is a member of the herpes virus family and one of the most common human viruses. When infection with EBV occurs during adolescence or young adulthood, it causes infectious mononucleosis 35% to 50% of the time.

How is Mononucleosis Spread?

Transmission of EBV requires intimate contact with the saliva (found in the mouth) of an infected person. Transmission of this virus through the air or blood does not normally occur.

How Soon Do Symptoms Appear?

The incubation period, the time between first exposure and the development of symptoms, range from 4 to 6 weeks.

What are the symptoms of Mononucleosis?

In young children the disease is generally mild and more difficult to recognize. Symptoms of infectious mononucleosis are fever, sore throat, and swollen lymph glands. Sometimes, a swollen spleen or liver involvement may develop. It is important to note that symptoms related to infectious mononucleosis caused by EBV infection seldom last for more than 4 months.

How is Mononucleosis Diagnosed and Treated?

The clinical diagnosis of infectious mononucleosis is suggested on the basis of the symptoms of fever, sore throat, swollen lymph

glands, and the age of the patient. Usually, laboratory tests are needed for confirmation. Serologic results for persons with infectious mononucleosis include an elevated white blood cell count, an increased percentage of certain atypical white blood cells, and a positive reaction to a "mono spot" test. There is no specific treatment for infectious mononucleosis, other than treating the symptoms. No antiviral drugs or vaccines are available. Some physicians have prescribed a 5-day course of steroids to control the swelling of the throat and tonsils.

What Can Be Done to Prevent the Spread of Mononucleosis?

Frequent hand washing and not sharing eating utensils or drinking glasses will help prevent the spread of Mononucleosis.

Should a person with Mononucleosis be excluded from school or child care?

The child should be removed from the school or child care setting during the period of time that he or she feels ill and unable to tolerate much general activity. In most cases, this is about 1 to 2 weeks.

Want more information?

Information about Mononucleosis and Epstein Barr virus, as well as other related health topics, can be found on The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please call (202) 442-9371.

