

Infectious Mononucleosis

Also known as mononucleosis or mono Pfeiffer's disease or glandular fever, infectious mononucleosis can be identified by inflamed lymph glands and constant fatigue. The disease is named so as the amount of mononuclear leukocytes which belong to white cells increase in number. The cause of the disease is EBV (Epstein - Barr virus) or in some cases cytomegalovirus. Both these viruses belong to the family of herpes simplex. According to statistic majority of the adults in the United States are exposed to the virus Epstein - Barr, a very widespread virus. Although the virus does not show any visible affects in children but it does in adolescents which can lead to infectious mononucleosis in nearly fifty percent of cases of exposure to the virus.

The other virus called cytomegalovirus which also belongs to the family of herpes simplex causes the cells to become enlarged. According to statistics, about eighty percent of adolescents infected with this virus generally don't see any further symptoms. Although EBV has potential to develop infectious mononucleosis in adolescents the virus could make throat and blood cells its home for the lifetime. The virus has the capability to bounce back and reactive from time to time but the consolation is that it would reactivate without symptoms.

The condition usually lasts for 1-2 months. The symptoms may vary from one adolescent to other but may include inflamed lymph glands in areas such as groin, neck and armpits, fever, continuous fatigue, enlarged spleen, sore throat as a result of tonsillitis that can make things difficult to swallow and last but not the least minor liver damage that can lead to short-term jaundice. Some adolescents may also experience symptoms such as abdominal pain, petechial hemorrhage, muscle ache, headache, depression, loss of appetite, skin rash, weakness, dizziness, enlarged prostate, dry cough, swelled genitals and puffy and swollen eyes. Some parents are puzzled by the symptoms of mononucleosis as it may be similar to other medical conditions. It is safe to consult a doctor in such cases.

The viruses are usually transmitted to other people through saliva (the reason why it is also called kissing disease), blood, sharing drinks and sharing utensils. The symptoms usually lasts for 4-6 weeks and do not cross 4 months. The disease is diagnosable but requires a thorough medical history of the adolescent. The diagnosis also involves physical examination of the adolescent and is based on symptoms reported to the physician. The diagnosis is further supported by laboratory test like blood test, antibody test and test to count white blood cells.

A rest of about a month is generally advised and normal activities can be

resumed after acute symptoms disappear. Also care should be taken to avoid physical activities which are heavy in nature and also activities or sports involving physical contacts should also be avoided. Care must also be taken to avoid eating sweet things in excess for few months.

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Word Count 485