

INFECTIOUS MONONUCLEOSIS

This disease is commonly called “mono”, and caused by infection with the Epstein-



Barr Virus (EBV) [sometimes CMV virus also causes a similar disease]. It has been called the kissing disease but actually up to 80% of children have gotten the disease by the age of 5 years old.

The reason we recognize it as a disease of young adults is because the disease is much more debilitating when contracted in later years. The virus that causes this disease is transmitted through saliva, so kissing can spread the virus, but so can coughing, sneezing, or sharing a glass or food utensil. Mononucleosis isn't as contagious as some other infections, such as the common cold. It has 4-8 weeks incubation period (time between exposure and illness), so it can be difficult to remember where you might have gotten it. And after having mono you might have the virus in your saliva for months!

Whereas a young child may only have a slight fever and sore throat for a week or so, an older person can feel wiped out and possible have tonsils swollen so large that they need steroids just to keep the tonsils small enough that they can eat and breathe comfortably.

Enlargement of the spleen

Mononucleosis may cause enlargement of the spleen. In extreme cases, your spleen may rupture, causing sharp, sudden pain in the left side of your upper abdomen. If such pain occurs, seek medical attention immediately — you may need surgery.

Hepatitis

It is fairly common to experience mild liver inflammation (hepatitis) with mono. That can cause nausea or even jaundice. It still goes away with the rest of the mono symptoms.

Everything in between the above extremes may be seen. Most people can continue to work and go to school but should be sure to get plenty of sleep and eat right. Sports may be continued only if we say it's OK for you. The spleen can enlarge with mono (it does so in approximately ½ of people), causing it to escape from its normal protective barrier of the ribs. If enlarged, contact sports could damage the spleen. So if you want to be active in sports, be sure we check your spleen every 1-2 week's until you're better.

A concurrent strep throat can occur, so if you are feeling worse, do let us know. Sometimes the throat swelling is so bad we use steroids to reduce the swelling. Again- there is no antibiotic medicine yet to speed your recovery. Just get plenty of sleep, take it easier than usual, eat well, and get our approval for the sports you feel up to participating in. rev tsg 3-2011

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