

## Mononucleosis

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### WHAT IS MONO?

Mononucleosis is a viral illness usually caused by the Epstein-Barr virus, or EBV.

### SYMPTOMS OF MONO

- ◆ Fatigue, malaise (feeling poorly), and muscle aches
- ◆ Fever, sore throat, swollen lymph nodes
- ◆ Headaches - can be severe
- ◆ Abdominal pain, nausea, or vomiting. Jaundice (yellowing of the eyes and skin) if liver inflammation
- ◆ Enlarged spleen; left side pain
- ◆ A generalized rash or hives

### FACTS ABOUT MONO

- ◆ Infection with EBV is common all over the world, with peak incidence being in adolescents and young adults.
- ◆ The incubation period, or time from exposure to illness, is ~4-6 weeks in young adults. Most people will only get mono once, but it can recur.
- ◆ Mono is spread by saliva by sharing eating utensils, drinking after someone, or kissing. It is spread like the common cold by sneezing/ coughing. Handwashing is important to help prevent getting mono. It is common not to know who gave mono to you.
- ◆ Spontaneous rupture of the spleen or liver, although very rare, is possible and can be life-threatening.

### TESTING

- ◆ The heterophile or Monospot test is positive in ~40% of those with Mono in the first week of their illness. By the third week of illness, 80-90% of those infected have a positive Monospot test. This is the most common blood test for mono and is available at SHC.
- ◆ EBV titers can be done when the Monospot is negative but a person has typical symptoms for mono. It measures antibodies to the mono virus.
- ◆ Liver function tests may be checked if a student with mono has abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting or jaundice. The liver usually recovers without complications.

### TREATMENT

- ◆ There are no medicines that cure Mono or shorten the course of it.
- ◆ Sometimes people are infected with both Mono and other viruses or bacteria. In cases where a bacterial infection is also suspected, antibiotics may be prescribed to treat the bacterial aspect of the illness but the antibiotics will have no effect on the mono virus.
- ◆ If someone has very large tonsils that have a potential to obstruct the airway, steroids may be prescribed. Steroids are also prescribed if the spleen is enlarged to help decrease the inflammation. A spleen that is not protected by the lower rib cage is at risk for injury/ hemorrhaging if a person falls, is exercising, or playing sports.
- ◆ Avoid acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and alcohol, as both can be toxic to the liver if there is any liver inflammation. Your provider can tell you when it is okay to take acetaminophen if you cannot take ibuprofen.
- ◆ Getting plenty of sleep is critical for your body to fight off the virus and heal. Your energy levels will fluctuate. You may feel great one day and exhausted the next.
- ◆ Your provider will make specific recommendations on physical activity and sports. In general, recommendations to refrain from sports and physical activity are 3-6 weeks; however, your provider will discuss this more in detail based on what symptoms you have, how you are doing, and if there are any complications.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

[www.uptodate.com/contents/patient information](http://www.uptodate.com/contents/patient-information)  
[www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health library](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health-library)