

INFECTIOUS MONONUCLEOSIS

TO YOUR HEALTH - PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

5.4

DESCRIPTION

An infection caused by the Epstein Barr virus that affects the respiratory system, liver and lymphatic system. It usually affects adolescents and young adults. (12 to 40 years).

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Fever
- Sore throat (sometimes severe) and may have white patches
- Appetite loss
- Fatigue
- Swollen lymph glands, usually in the neck, underarms or groin
- Enlarged spleen
- Enlarged liver
- Jaundice with yellow skin and eyes
- Headache
- General aching

CAUSES

A contagious virus (Epstein-Barr virus) transmitted from person to person by close contact, such as kissing, sharing food, or coughing. Signs and/or symptoms usually develop four to six weeks after exposure.

RISK INCREASES WITH

Stress.
Recent illness that has lowered resistance.
Fatigue or overwork. The high rate among college students and military recruits may result from inadequate rest and crowded living conditions.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Avoid close contact with persons having infectious mononucleosis.
- If you have mononucleosis, avoid contact with persons with immune deficiencies to prevent them from getting mononucleosis.
- Wash hands frequently.
- Adequate rest and nutrition.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

It usually clears up on its own in 10 days to 6 months. Fatigue usually lasts for 3 to 6 weeks after other symptoms get better. A few patients have a chronic form in which symptoms persist for months or years.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Ruptured spleen resulting in emergency surgery

- Anemia

- In rare cases, the heart, lungs, or central nervous system could become involved. The disease can prove serious, even fatal.

GENERAL MEASURES

- Diagnostic tests may include laboratory blood studies.
- No specific cure is available. Extra rest and healthy diet are important. There is no need to keep away from other people
- To relieve sore throat, gargle frequently with warm salt water (1/2 teaspoon of salt to 8 oz. of water). Don't strain hard for bowel movements. Consider using a stool softener if constipated. This may injure an enlarged spleen.

MEDICATION

- For minor discomfort, you may use non-prescription drugs such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen. CAUTION: Take only as directed on package. Don't take aspirin because of its suspected association with Reye's syndrome (a type of encephalitis).
- If symptoms are severe, you may be prescribed a short course of cortisone drugs.

ACTIVITY

Rest in bed, especially when you have fever. Resume activity gradually. Rest when you are fatigued. Avoid sports, exercise, and other activities until your medical provider tells you it is safe.

DIET

No special diet. You may not feel like eating while you are ill. Maintain an adequate fluid intake. Drink at least 8 glasses of water or juice a day or more during periods of high fever.

NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF...

- Fever over 102°F (38.9°C).
- Constipation, if stool softeners are ineffective.
- Severe pain in the upper left abdomen (rupture of the spleen is a medical emergency)!
- Swallowing or breathing difficulty from severe throat inflammation.
- Sensation of your heart beating fast and hard
- Dark yellow colored (amber) urine.
- Difficulty breathing
- Yellowing of the skin.

Student Health Center



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This information is for educational purposes only. Consult your doctor for specific medical advice, diagnosis and treatment.

618-453-3311

Dial-A-Nurse is available after-hours until 10:30 p.m. during fall and spring semesters. In case of emergency dial 911.