

# Mononucleosis

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Mononucleosis (Mono) is a viral illness that is common among young adults. It is caused by the Epstein Barr Virus (EBV). It is transmitted through contact with mucus or saliva or by airborne droplets of saliva or mucus.

The most common symptoms of mono are:

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Swollen lymph nodes in the neck
- Extreme fatigue
- General discomfort

Sometimes, liver involvement may develop, causing nausea, vomiting, decreased appetite, abdominal pain, and/or yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes (jaundice). The spleen may also swell as a result of mono, and may cause abdominal pain. This can place the individual at risk for splenic rupture, which requires emergency treatment. Heart problems or involvement of the central nervous system occurs only rarely, and infectious mononucleosis is almost never fatal. The typical case of mono lasts only 10-14 days; however, lingering fatigue may last a few weeks or several months after the other symptoms have subsided.

Mono can be diagnosed with a blood test – “Monospot”. This blood test may not be positive early in the illness and may need to be repeated about 1 week after symptoms begin. Often, a complete blood count is also done to monitor the white blood cells that often rise with an infection. There is no antiviral medication or vaccine available for mono. Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, but medical supervision is absolutely necessary. Patients are instructed to:

- Obtain 10-12 hours of sleep a day
- Not participate in contact sports, weightlifting, or jumping.
- Avoid strenuous exercise until energy returns to normal
- Not drink alcohol
- Not to take Tylenol (acetaminophen), Advil (Ibuprofen/Motrin may be taken)
- Increase intake of fluids
- Avoid caffeine
- Avoid social activities, limit activities to sleeping, eating and studying and if able, classes
- Remain at home if fever develops
- Eat a well-balanced diet

Mono is contagious, but probably no more than any other virus like the cold. Since it is transmitted through contact with mucus or saliva or by airborne droplets or saliva or mucus, do not share eating utensils or toothbrushes. Practice good hand-washing before and after food preparation, eating and after bathroom use.

Sources and/or additional resources:

Web MD: <http://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/infectious-mononucleosis-topic-overview>

Family Doctor.org: <http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/common/infections/common/viral/077.html>

Mayo Clinic: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/mononucleosis/DS00352>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/ebv.htm>

National Institutes of Health: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/infectiousmononucleosis.html>

If you are a registered Millersville University student and you have questions or you need to make an appointment, please call Millersville University Health Services at 871-5250.