

MONONUCLEOSIS (Mono) FACT SHEET

What is Mono?

Mononucleosis (mono) is an infectious disease caused most often by the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV). Mono is usually a mild illness that goes away without treatment after several weeks. Many people who get mono do not even know they have it.

How is Mono Spread?

EBV is not easily spread. It lives and grows in the nose and throat. Any fluid that comes from these parts of the body, including saliva, tears, or mucus, can be infected with the virus. EBV is spread when people come in contact with infected fluids, such as through intimate contact or sharing of saliva. You can get EBV if you share a drinking glass or eating utensils with an infected person. Some people carry EBV in their bodies throughout their lives but never get mono symptoms. Lifetime carriers of EBV are the most common source of EBV infection. It takes 4 to 6 weeks for symptoms to develop once a person comes in contact with EBV.

What are the symptoms of Mono?

- Fever, which may range from 101°F (38.33°C) up to 104°F (40°C), and chills.
- Sore throat, often with swollen tonsils and white patches on the tonsils (which may resemble Strep throat).
- Swollen lymph nodes all over the body, especially the lymph nodes located in the neck.
- Headache or body aches.
- A lack of energy and fatigue.
- Loss of appetite.
- Pain in the upper left part of the abdomen, which may indicate that the spleen has become enlarged.
- A rash can occur and is frequent in those who have been prescribed the antibiotics ampicillin or amoxicillin.
- Mono may cause a person's spleen to swell to 2 or 3 times its normal size; an enlarged spleen occurs in up to 50% of those with mono. A blow to the abdomen could cause the spleen to break open (rupture).

How is Mono Diagnosed?

A medical history and physical exam are the most important ways a health professional can diagnose mono. Simple blood tests may be done to help confirm the diagnosis. These tests include:

- Mononucleosis tests (including the monospot test and EBV antibody test) are blood tests. It is possible for the monospot test to come back negative early in the course of the infections (false negative).
- Complete blood count (CBC) may be done to help confirm the diagnosis of mono and rule out other infections or complications of mono.
- Other tests may be done if complications of mono occur or if the mononucleosis tests are negative.
- Liver tests may be done to study liver function and to determine if the liver is inflamed.
- If the monospot test is negative, a different blood test may be ordered to check for cytomegalovirus (CMV) or other infections. CMV can cause a mono-like illness.

Continued on reverse

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For an appointment: www.uhs.berkeley.edu or call **510-642-2000**

Clinic Nurse **510-643-7197** for advice

MONONUCLEOSIS (Mono) Fact Sheet (continued)

How is Mono Treated?

Usually no treatment for mono is needed. Most people recover from mono without other treatment within 1-4 weeks. However, for some it may take several months before they feel as if they have their normal energy level back again. This extended period of fatigue is not the same as having chronic fatigue syndrome.

Corticosteroids (such as Prednisone) may be used in a short course of treatment to control the swelling of the throat and tonsils. This type of steroid use may also decrease the overall length and severity of illness from infectious mono.

Antibiotics are prescribed only if bacterial infection (such as Strep throat) is also present.

How Can I Prevent Mono?

The virus that causes mono (Epstein-Barr virus [EBV]) is not spread as easily as most people think. If you follow these tips, you can reduce the chance of spreading or catching mono:

- Don't kiss or share dishes or eating utensils with someone who has mono.

Mono rarely recurs!

Self-Care of Diagnosed Mono

It may take several weeks (even months) for your energy level to return to normal. Don't try to rush this process. Pushing yourself too hard could make you feel worse.

- Give your body the rest it needs. You can then go back to your normal activities as you feel up to it.
- Mono can cause your spleen to enlarge, making it prone to injury. You should avoid heavy lifting and contact sports for 3 to 4 weeks after you become ill with Mono to reduce the risk of injuring your spleen.
- Alcohol consumption and other drugs not specifically prescribed should be avoided for at least 4 weeks because mono sometimes affects the liver.
- Generous fluid intake may improve your sense of well-being and is especially important if you have a fever.
- If this illness causes you to miss classes and get behind with your academic responsibilities contact Social Services at 642-6074.

Adapted from www.webmd.com

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