

MONONUCLEOSIS (INFECTIOUS)

Information for School-Aged Children

Infectious mononucleosis (mono) is often seen in high school and college students. About 50% of those infected will develop symptoms of infectious mononucleosis.

CAUSE: Herpesviruses. Most of the cases are caused by Epstein-Barr virus (EBV); about 5%-7% of cases are caused by cytomegalovirus (CMV).

SYMPTOMS: Fever, sore throat, swollen glands (especially behind the neck), headache, tiredness, and sometimes a rash. Infectious mononucleosis usually lasts from one week to several weeks. It may take weeks to months for a person with mono to regain their former energy level; however, this will vary from person to person.

Less common problems include jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eyes) and/or enlarged spleen or liver. Although rare, the spleen may rupture in extreme cases.

SPREAD: From person to person through saliva. Spread can occur by kissing or sharing items contaminated with saliva (e.g., drinking cups, straws, bottles, mouthed pens and pencils, or toothbrushes). Since this virus does not live long on surfaces and objects, you need to be exposed to fresh body fluids (saliva) to become infected.

INCUBATION: It takes about 4 to 6 weeks from the time a person is exposed until symptoms begin.

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD: From many weeks to a year or more. Some adults are carriers of the virus.

EXCLUSION: None. Because students/adults can have the virus without any symptoms, and can be contagious for such a long time, excluding students/adults who have mononucleosis will not prevent spread. The student may not be able to participate in routine activities. **NOTE: If the spleen is enlarged, students should avoid contact sports for 6 weeks or until the healthcare provider has given approval for the student to continue with the sport(s).**

DIAGNOSIS: Call your healthcare provider. Blood tests are available.

TREATMENT: Call your healthcare provider. They may suggest the need for bed rest, the need to drink plenty of water, and the length of time that the student should not lift heavy objects or exercise vigorously, including participating in contact sports.

PREVENTION/CONTROL:

1. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after any contact with saliva or items contaminated with saliva. **Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.**
2. DO NOT share drinking cups, bottles, straws, cigarettes, mouthed pens and pencils, toothbrushes, or lip balm.
3. DO NOT share water bottles and towels during gym class or sports events.

For more information, you or your healthcare provider may call Hennepin County Community Health Department at (952) 351-5230, or call your local health department.

Prepared by Hennepin County Community Health Department with the support of the local and state disease prevention and control staff and childcare consultants.

January 2003