



MONONUCLEOSIS (“Mono”, “Kissing Disease”)

What is MONONUCLEOSIS?

Mononucleosis is an acute viral illness that produces very mild symptoms in infants and young children. Often there are no symptoms at all. Adolescents and young adults are more prone to experience more symptoms. High school and college students are most commonly diagnosed with “Mono.”

How is mononucleosis spread?

Mononucleosis is caused by the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV) and is spread person to person, through saliva. Spread can occur by kissing or sharing items contaminated with saliva (i.e., drinking cups, bottles, and toys). A person can become sick up to four to six weeks after being exposed to the virus.

What are the symptoms of mononucleosis?

Symptoms of mononucleosis are fever, sore throat, fatigue and swollen lymph glands. Sometimes the spleen or liver may become swollen so contact sports are discouraged until symptoms are gone. Heart problems or involvement of the central nervous system occurs only rarely. Mononucleosis is almost never fatal. There are no known associations between active mono infection and problems during pregnancy, such as miscarriages or birth defects. The symptoms of mononucleosis usually resolve in one or two months.

How is mononucleosis treated?

There is no specific treatment for infectious mononucleosis, other than treating the symptoms. No antiviral drugs or vaccines are available. Some physicians may prescribe a short course of oral steroids to control the swelling of the throat and tonsils. Steroids may decrease the overall length and severity of illness.

Can I prevent my children from getting mononucleosis?

Good handwashing after any contact with saliva, or items contaminated with saliva, is probably the single most effective means of controlling transmission and preventing spread of this disease. Avoid drinking beverages from a common shared container. In child care centers, mouthed toys and surfaces should be cleaned daily and when visibly soiled, with a 10% bleach solution.

Do I have to keep my child out of daycare or school?

Since children can have the virus without any symptoms, and people can be contagious for such a long period of time, excluding children (or staff) from childcare centers or school is not necessary.