



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND UNIVERSITY HEALTH CENTER

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Infectious Mononucleosis “Mono”

Infectious mononucleosis (Mono) is an acute viral illness caused by Epstein-Barr virus. It is spread by direct oral contact with an infected person, and can also be spread by sharing drinks, eating utensils, toothbrushes, glasses, etc.

Symptoms

Symptoms can range from very mild to acute. The most common symptoms are sore throat, fever, swollen neck glands, and fatigue. Some people may develop a red rash, jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes), or abdominal pain. The spleen may become enlarged and tender.

Diagnosis

The symptoms of mono are very similar to many other illnesses, such as Strep throat and other viruses. Because of this, it may be necessary to perform several laboratory tests to confirm the diagnosis of mono. A negative monospot does not rule out mono. It can take several weeks of illness before the monospot test can detect mono.

Duration

The symptoms last anywhere from 2 to 6 weeks, sometimes longer, depending on the severity. Some people have very mild cases, and recover fully without knowing they had mono. However, symptoms can also be very severe and debilitating, especially if jaundice, very enlarged tonsils or fever persist. Complications, although very rare, do occur. One of these complications is an enlarged spleen that ruptures due to trauma from sports, weight lifting, etc. It is not uncommon to be fatigued and weak for several weeks after the acute signs and symptoms resolve.

Treatment

Since mono is a viral illness, antibiotics are not effective in treating mono. If you have strep throat along with mono, antibiotics will be necessary to treat the strep throat. The most important treatment is REST.

YOUR BODY WILL LET YOU
KNOW WHEN IT NEEDS TO REST.
DO NOT OVERTAX YOURSELF.

- Do not share glasses, etc. with roommates, friends, etc.
- AVOID alcohol because there can be liver changes with mono that are worsened with alcohol.
- AVOID contact sports that may cause trauma to your spleen.
- Use Tylenol for fever and throat pain. A short course of prednisone may be necessary if you are having trouble drinking and eating due to enlarged tonsils. Popsicles are an excellent way to get fluids.

It is advisable to have regular follow-ups with your practitioner to make sure you are keeping up with classes, drinking enough fluids, and recovering from mono without serious complications.

If your symptoms worsen or you develop abdominal pain, vomiting, persistent fever, or difficulty breathing, see your practitioner immediately or call 911.

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