

UAB Health Education

STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

MONONUCLEOSIS (MONO)



Mononucleosis is a viral infection characterized by fever, severe sore throat and swollen neck glands. It is usually caused by Epstein Barr virus (EBV), and rarely is caused by other viruses such as cytomegalovirus (CMV). EBV is present in saliva, so is often referred to as the “kissing disease.” It can be spread by intimate oral contact, and by sharing drinking glasses, bottles, and cans. It is common among teenagers and young adults.

SYMPTOMS

Around 1 in 4 teenagers and young adults infected with mono will develop symptoms. Average incubation period is around 1 month, meaning there is a significant delay between infection and symptoms appearing. Signs and symptoms include:

- Sore throat
- Extreme fatigue
- Intermittent fever as high as 103°F
- Headache, muscle aches
- Swollen glands in neck, armpit and groin
- White patches in back of the throat, rash
- Loss of appetite, nausea
- Spleen or liver enlargement

DIAGNOSIS

Based on history, physical exam, and blood tests, including **Monospot** test. Blood tests may not be positive until around a week into illness because a positive result is due to the development of antibodies fighting the infection. Once diagnosed there is no need for follow up blood tests.

TREATMENT

Most people recover completely without any medication. Symptoms will eventually subside; however, fatigue and weakness can persist for a month or more. Sometimes strep throat can co-exist with mono, in which case your clinician may prescribe an antibiotic to treat the secondary bacterial infection. Because mono is a viral infection, it cannot be treated with antibiotics. General recommendations:

- Rest. Do not play contact sports or engage in vigorous physical activity until released by medical provider
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Avoid alcohol for 3-6 weeks because of liver involvement
- Relieve sore throat with throat lozenges and by gargling warm salt water
- Relieve muscle aches, headaches and fever with acetaminophen or ibuprofen (Tylenol, Advil, Motrin)

RESOURCES

FamilyDoctor.org <https://familydoctor.org/condition/mononucleosis/>

Mayo Clinic <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/mononucleosis/symptoms-causes/syc-20350328>

CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/epstein-barr/about-mono.html>

RISK FACTORS

Because of an enlarged spleen, there is a possibility that the spleen can rupture, causing:

- Pain in left upper abdomen or chest
- Feeling light-headed, increased heart rate
- Difficulty breathing

CALL STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES:

- If you develop a tender abdomen seek immediate medical attention

PREVENTION

- Avoid sharing drinks, kissing for 3-6 weeks



STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

The University of Alabama at Birmingham

Clinic: 205-934-3580

After Hours: 205-934-3411

<https://www.uab.edu/students/health/>

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