



# Mononucleosis

Mononucleosis (mono) is a common viral infection most often identified in high school and college-aged students. About 50% of those infected will develop symptoms of infectious mononucleosis.

## School health and childcare provider information

### Cause

Most cases are caused by Epstein-Barr virus (EBV or human herpesvirus 4); however, about 5% to 7% of cases are caused by cytomegalovirus (CMV).

### Symptoms

Fever, sore throat, swollen glands (especially behind the neck), headache, tiredness, and sometimes a rash. Mono can last up to several weeks. It may take weeks to months to regain energy; 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.

Some children or infected individuals will have no symptoms.

### Spread

Mono is 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, lip balm, toothbrushes). Since the virus does not live long on surfaces and objects, one must be exposed to fresh saliva.

### Incubation

It takes about 4 to 7 weeks from the time a person is exposed until symptoms begin.

### Contagious period

From many weeks to a year or more.

### Exclusion

#### *Childcare and school*

None, as long as the child is able to participate in routine activities. Because children/adults can have the virus without any symptoms and can be contagious for a long time, exclusion will not prevent spread.

#### *Sports*

Contact sports should be avoided until the child is recovered fully and the spleen is no longer palpable.

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## Diagnosis

A health care provider may do blood tests.

## Treatment

May include bed rest, drinking plenty of fluids, and restrictions on lifting heavy objects, vigorous exercise, and contact sports.

## Prevention

- 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 communicable diseases.
- Do not allow sharing of drinking cups, bottles, straws, cigarettes, mouthed pens and pencils, toothbrushes, or lip balm. Do not allow sharing of water bottles during sports events.
- Avoid kissing an infected child on the lips or having contact with their saliva.
- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled (see Section 2).

For more information, call Hennepin County HSPHD-Epidemiology at (612) 543-5230 or call your local health department.

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