

MONONUCLEOSIS, INFECTIOUS

BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

An infectious viral disease that affects the respiratory system, liver and lymphatic system. It usually affects adolescents and young adults (12 to 40 years).

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Fever.
- Sore throat (sometimes severe).
- Appetite loss.
- Fatigue.
- Swollen lymph glands, usually in the neck, underarms or groin.
- Enlarged spleen.
- Enlarged liver.
- Jaundice with yellow skin and eyes (sometimes).
- Headache.
- General aching.

CAUSES

A contagious virus (Epstein-Barr virus) transmitted from person to person by close contact, such as kissing, shared food or coughing.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Stress.
- Illness that has lowered resistance.
- Fatigue or overwork. The high incidence among college students and military recruits may result from inadequate rest and crowded living conditions.
- High school or college student.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Avoid contact with persons having infectious mononucleosis.
- If you have mononucleosis, avoid contact with persons with immune deficiencies to prevent them from getting mononucleosis.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Spontaneous recovery in 10 days to 6 months. Fatigue frequently persists for 3 to 6 weeks after other symptoms disappear. A few patients experience a chronic form in which symptoms persist for months or years.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Ruptured spleen, resulting in emergency surgery.
- Anemia.
- In rare cases, the heart, lungs or central nervous system could become involved, and the disease can prove serious, even fatal.

TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Diagnostic tests may include laboratory blood studies.
- No specific cure is available. Extra rest and healthy diet are important. No need for quarantine.
- To relieve the sore throat, gargle frequently with double-strength tea or warm salt water (1 teaspoon of salt to 8 oz. of water).
- Don't strain hard for bowel movements. This may injure an enlarged spleen.
- In rare cases, the spleen may rupture, necessitating an emergency surgical operation.

MEDICATIONS

- For minor discomfort, you may use non-prescription drugs such as acetaminophen. Don't take aspirin because of its suspected association with Reye's syndrome.
- If symptoms are severe, you may be prescribed a short course of cortisone drugs.

ACTIVITY

- Rest in bed, especially when you have fever. Resume activity gradually. Rest when you are fatigued.
- Don't participate in contact sports until at least 1 month after complete recovery.

DIET

No special diet. You may not feel like eating while you are ill. Maintain an adequate fluid intake. Drink at least 8 glasses of water or juice a day or more during periods of high fever.

NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of infectious mononucleosis.
- The following occur during treatment:
 - Fever over 102° F (38.9° C). Constipation, which may cause straining.
 - Severe pain in the upper left abdomen (rupture of the spleen is a medical emergency!).
 - Yellowing of the skin. Swallowing or breathing difficulty from severe throat inflammation.

Adapted from Instructions for Patients, Sixth Edition, H. Winter Griffith, M.D., W.B Saunders Company.