



Indiana State Department of Health

Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

About...Mononucleosis Epstein–Barr Virus (EBV)

What is mono?

Mononucleosis (Mono) is a disease most commonly caused by the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), a member of the herpes virus group. Infections may go unrecognized in young children. The virus occurs worldwide, and most people become infected with EBV sometime during their lives. In the United States, as many as 95% of adults between 35 and 40 years of age have been infected. EBV establishes a lifelong dormant infection in some cells of the body's immune system. There are no known associations between active EBV infection and problems during pregnancy, such as miscarriages or birth defects.

Mono is not a reportable disease so the number of cases is not tracked in Indiana.

What are the symptoms of mono?

Symptoms can include fever, sore throat, swollen glands. An enlarged spleen is also typical in cases among adolescents and young adults. Occasionally, infection may cause a rash. Fatigue may occur for a few weeks following the infection. Complications may include aseptic meningitis, encephalitis, or Guillian-Barre syndrome.

How is mono spread?

Mono is spread by direct contact with the saliva of an infected person. Most individuals exposed to people with infectious mono have previously been infected with EBV and are not at risk for infectious mono. In addition, transmission of EBV requires intimate contact with the saliva (found in the mouth) of an infected person. Transmission of this virus through the air or blood does not normally occur.

Who is at risk for getting mono?

All people who have never been ill with mono are at risk of getting mononucleosis.

How do I know if I have mono?

Physicians use blood tests to diagnose mono in symptomatic individuals.

How is mono treated?

There is no specific treatment for mono.

Some interventions to assist in relief of symptoms include:

- Get plenty of bed rest.
- Drink lots of water and fruit juices to relieve fever and prevent dehydration.
- Gargle with salt water to relieve sore throat.
- Consider over-the-counter pain relievers. Do not give aspirin to children under the age of 16 years.

You should speak with your healthcare provider for specific instructions. Avoiding sports activities may be recommended for at least a month after symptoms have resolved because of the increased risk of a ruptured spleen and lack of energy.

How is mono prevented?

Mono can be prevented by using respiratory etiquette, frequent hand washing, and by avoiding saliva sharing activities.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/epstein-barr/>.

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