



MID-JERSEY PEDIATRICS

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INFECTIOUS MONONUCLEOSIS

Infectious Mononucleosis or “**Mono**” is an illness caused by the Epstein-Barr virus. The virus is highly concentrated in the saliva and has a long incubation period which is estimated to be 30 to 50 days. Asymptomatic carriage and transmission is very common. In fact, there are two asymptomatic infections for each symptomatic infection. Many people are actually infected during childhood. Once the virus is acquired, it is secreted in the saliva intermittently throughout life. Acute infection, whether recognized or not, results in lifelong immunity.

Symptoms of mono include fever, sore throat, fatigue, swelling of the lymph glands and in some patients enlargement of the liver and/or spleen. The disease is usually diagnosed in teenagers and young adults. Mononucleosis in younger children often goes unrecognized due to its shorter and milder course.

The diagnosis of mono is made by physical examination and confirmed with a blood test taken after the first 5-7 days of illness. In most cases a CBC and a Mono Spot Test are done at the outpatient laboratory. Occasionally, blood must be sent out for more specific testing. A positive Mono Test may remain positive for a year or longer even after the patient has fully recovered from the illness. A Strep screening test may also be indicated because of the sore throat. Strep throat and mono may be present at the same time.

There is no medication that will cure mono or hasten the recovery. Like most viral illness the virus must run its course. The likelihood of recurrence, serious complication, or chronic mononucleosis developing is **very** low. While mono is an infectious disease, it is **not** very contagious for most individuals. It is not necessary to isolate patients with mono but good hygienic practices such as hand washing are always appropriate.

Treatment

- Antibiotics are not helpful, since “mono” is caused by a virus.
- Rest is important, but it may be possible for the patient to attend school under some circumstances. Speak to your doctor about this.
- While patients often have little or no appetite and the sore throat of mono can be very uncomfortable, it is important to drink an adequate amount of fluid to avoid dehydration. Solid food should be to the patients taste and there are no restrictions.
- Fever and sore throat are treated with Tylenol, throat spray or lozenges. Warm or cold liquids may be helpful in alleviating the throat discomfort. Gargling with salt water may also be effective. If the Strep test is positive the patient will be prescribed an antibiotic for the Strep, although it will not be effective for treating the mono virus.
- In some instances of **severe** symptoms your doctor may recommend starting the patient on a course of steroids.
- For 6-8 weeks after the onset of acute infectious mono heavy lifting and contact sports should be avoided because of the danger of rupture of the spleen.

The duration of mononucleosis is variable. The average length of the illness is 3-4 weeks. Occasionally an individual with a mild case may recover earlier; however, some patients will require six weeks or longer. While it may be possible to attend school before the illness has resolved, it would be prudent to notify the school of the patient's condition in anticipation of a prolonged absence. In most instances provisions can be made to have school work sent home where it can be done during those times of the day when the student has the energy and ability to concentrate.

Follow up appointments will be made in order to determine when **it** is appropriate for the patient to return to full activities.