

Mono

✧ This pamphlet has been designed by the health care professionals of Marquette General Health Systems to provide you with information about Mono. After reading this pamphlet you should be able to discuss:

- what Mono is.
- how to get Mono.
- what the symptoms of Mono are.
- how Mono is treated.

◆ WHAT IS MONO?

✧ Mononucleosis is an illness caused by a virus, usually the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV). Many people catch Mono as children, and have mild flu-like symptoms. Even as adults, most people who get Mono are only sick a few weeks.

✧ EBV first infects the mucus membranes of the mouth, nose and throat. It may also be able to infect cells lining the vagina.

✧ From any of these cells, EBV spreads to a type of white blood cell that travels throughout the body, spreading the virus with it.

◆ HOW DO YOU GET IT?

✧ Mono is passed by saliva. Only intimate contact such as kissing and perhaps sexual intercourse is likely to spread the infection.

✧ Mono has a long incubation period. From the time a person is infected until symptoms start can be 1-2 months. If you have Mono now, you may have been infected weeks ago.

✧ Many people are infectious without symptoms. Some never even feel sick. Others no longer feel sick, but still produce viruses for several weeks or even months.

✧ You may have been infected by someone who wasn't having symptoms. Fewer than 10% of people who get Mono know who they caught it from.

✧ If someone you know has Mono, you should avoid intimate contact with that person.

✧ If you've been intimate with someone who now has Mono, taking especially good care of yourself (healthy diet, exercise, and enough rest) may help keep you from getting ill.

◆ HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU HAVE MONO?

✧ Your body has white blood cells that produce antibodies in response to a virus infection.

✧ The presence of these antibodies in your blood (called sero-conversion) is the basis for testing whether you have Mono.

✧ Many people infected with Mono don't get sick, or have such mild symptoms they never know they had it.

◆ WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

✧ Classic Mono symptoms:

- swollen lymph glands
- sore throat
- fever
- fatigue

✧ Other symptoms may include headache, poor appetite, muscle aches, nausea and a skin rash.

◆ WILL MY FRIENDS GET IT?

✧ If you have Mono, only people you've had intimate contact with are likely to catch it. Other friends, family or co-workers are safe.

◆ HOW IS MONO TREATED?

✧ Because Mono is caused by a virus, **antibiotics won't help.**

✧ Some people don't miss school or work if they take it easy and get as much rest as possible. Other people need to take 1-2 weeks away from regular activities.

Steps to feeling better:

- Get plenty of rest. Nap. Take it easy.
- Eat healthy foods.
- Don't drink alcohol.
- Drink lots of fluids.
- *Take acetaminophen* for pain and fever. (Aspirin and ibuprofen may cause problems in some people.)
- *Relieve sore throat* by gargling salt water. (1/4 teaspoon salt to a cup of water) , sucking ice cubes or lozenges, or holding a cold pack to you throat.
- *Avoid strenuous activity* such as hard exercise or contact sports for several weeks.

✧ Because the spleen often swells with Mono, spleen rupture is a possible serious complication. Its first symptom is abdominal pain and/or pain spreading into the left shoulder.

80-95% of adults in the U.S. have Mono by the time they are 40; only about 20% know they've had it.

◆ SHOULD I GET HEALTH CARE?

✧ If you think you have Mono, call your health care provider. There are other illnesses that produce the same symptoms as Mono, but respond to different treatments.

✧ A throat culture or blood test may be needed to determine the cause of your symptoms.

✧ Call your health care provider right away if you have:

- *Abdominal pain* and/or pain in your left shoulder.
- *Jaundice* (yellow color in eyes or skin) or dark colored urine.
- *Trouble breathing* from swelling in your throat.
- *Inability to swallow fluids* because of throat pain or swelling.
- *Other symptoms that don't improve* after 1 week.