

Emergency Services

Mononucleosis (Mono) - Adult

What is Mono?

Mononucleosis (Mono) is an infection caused by the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV). The virus spreads through your saliva (your spit). This is why you might hear it called the 'kissing disease'.

Many people (including babies and young children) catch Mono. When they do, the illness feels more like a simple cold or a mild fever. Mono is more common in people aged 15 to 24 years.

Most people get better in 2 to 4 weeks. Some people feel tired for a few months after.

Are there risks to having Mono?

Mono might cause your spleen to swell. Your spleen is in your abdomen (belly) and its job is to filter your blood.

While you are recovering, it is important to protect your abdomen and lower back. A hit or blow to the abdomen (belly) or back could cause the swollen spleen to burst open and bleed into your abdomen.

How is Mono treated?

Because Mono is caused by a virus, you do not need antibiotics. Rest at home and actions to relieve the effects of the virus is usually all that is needed.

When to get help

Go to the nearest Emergency Department right away if:

- The back of your throat becomes so swollen that it is really hard to breathe or swallow.
- You suddenly have a really sharp pain in the upper left part of your abdomen.

Go see your family doctor or go to the nearest walk-in clinic if:

- You are finding it hard to drink enough fluids each day.
- You are not feeling well enough to return to work or school after 2 weeks.
- You are still feeling unwell after 4 weeks.

How to care for yourself at home

Get plenty of rest

- Rest when you feel you need it. You do not need to stay in bed.
- Stay home from work or school until the fever is gone and you can swallow easily.
- Gradually return to your regular activities.

Reduce your fever

Relieve any aches and pains

- Take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin). Follow the instructions on the bottle.

How to care for yourself at home

Keep hydrated

- Drink enough fluid that your urine (pee) is a light yellow colour. This is especially important while you have a fever.
- Drink fluids such as water, ginger ale, or sports drinks.

Sooth your sore throat

- Drink cool liquids.
- Suck on ice cubes or popsicles.
- Gargle with warm saltwater. To make saltwater, add 1 teaspoon (5 mL) of salt to 1 cup (250ml) of warm water.
- Eat foods that are easy to swallow such as soup, pudding, pureed fruit, porridge, ice cream, and yogurt.

Protect your spleen

- For the next 4 weeks or until your regular doctor has said it is okay, **do not** take part in any contact sports and **do not** do any activities that could result in an injury to your abdomen (such as football, hockey, lacrosse, skiing, snowboarding, cycling).

How to prevent the spread of Mono

While not easily spread, you can pass the virus on to others, especially while you have a fever.

To limit the spread of the virus:

- Wash your hands often.
- Do not share a drinking glass or eating utensils.
- Do not share your toothbrush.
- Do not kiss others until the fever has been gone for several days.
- Throw out used tissues right away.
- Wash anything that comes in contact with your saliva (spit) such as pens or pencils. For children with Mono, wash toys often and do not allow the toys to be shared with other children.

To learn more, it's good to ask:

- Your family doctor
- Your pharmacist
- Fraser Health Virtual Care
1-800-314-0999 or live chat online at fraserhealth.ca/virtualcare
10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., daily
- HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf and hard of hearing) or go online at HealthLinkBC.ca