

# 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.*