

# Mono (Infectious Mononucleosis)

## Definition

- Mononucleosis (mono) is a viral infection of the lymph nodes
- Main symptoms are sore throat and widespread swollen lymph nodes

## Health Information

### Symptoms

- Severe sore throat
- Large red tonsils covered with pus
- Swollen lymph nodes in the neck, armpits, and groin
- Fever for up to 7 days
- Tiredness and increased sleeping
- Enlarged spleen (in 50% of children)

### Diagnosis

- Mono is diagnosed by positive blood tests
- Blood smear shows many atypical (unusual) white blood cells

### Cause

- Mono is caused by the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV).
- This virus is passed to others in infected saliva (spit).
- Occurs more often in 15- to 25-year-olds. Reason: more intimate contacts with others.
- After the virus enters the body, it can take 4 to 7 weeks before symptoms begin.

### Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

- The symptoms of chronic fatigue syndrome are tiredness and weakness. There is also a constant feeling that you need more sleep.
- The symptoms must be present for at least 6 months.
- Any connection to mono has never been proven.

### Prevention of Spread to Others

- Mono is not very contagious. People in the same household rarely come down with it.
- Avoid kissing at least until the fever and sore throat are gone.
- Also use separate drinking glasses and utensils for the same time.

## Care Advice

### 1. Overview:

- Mono is a viral infection of the lymph nodes.
- Symptoms will go away on their own. This is usually within a week to 10 days.
- There is no drug that can cure mono.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. **Sore Throat Pain Relief:**
  - Age over 1 year. Can sip warm fluids such as chicken broth or apple juice.
  - Age over 6 years. Can also suck on hard candy or lollipops. Butterscotch seems to help.
  - Age over 8 years. Can also gargle. Use warm water with a little table salt added. A liquid antacid can be added instead of salt. Use Mylanta or the store brand. No prescription is needed.
  - Medicated throat sprays or lozenges are generally not helpful.
3. **Pain Medicine:**
  - To help with the pain, give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Use as needed.
4. **Fever:**
  - For fevers above 102° F (39° C), give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Note: Lower fevers are important for fighting infections.
  - For ALL fevers: Keep your child well hydrated. Give lots of cold fluids.
5. **Antibiotics Not Needed:**
  - Only bacterial infections are helped by antibiotics.
  - Antibiotics will not kill viruses.
6. **Fluids and Soft Diet:**
  - Try to get your child to drink adequate fluids. Goal: Keep your child well hydrated.
  - Cold drinks, milk shakes, popsicles, slushes, and sherbet are good choices.
  - **Solids.** Offer a soft diet. Also avoid foods that need much chewing. Avoid citrus, salty, or spicy foods. Note: Fluid intake is much more important than eating any solids.
  - Swollen tonsils can make some solid foods hard to swallow.
7. **Rest:**
  - Bed rest will not shorten the course of the illness or reduce symptoms.
  - Your child can select how much rest he or she needs.
8. **Activity and Precautions for an Enlarged Spleen:**
  - The spleen gets bigger than normal in 50% of those with mono.
  - A blow to the belly area could rupture the enlarged spleen. This can cause serious bleeding and is a surgical emergency.
  - All children with mono need to avoid contact sports and exercise. Avoid these activities for at least 4 weeks.
  - Your doctor will check your child's spleen size by exam. You should get the medical okay to return to sports from your doctor.
9. **What to Expect:**
  - Most children have only mild symptoms that last about a week.
  - Even those with severe symptoms usually feel completely well in 2 to 4 weeks.
  - The most common complication is dehydration from not drinking enough fluids.
10. **Return to School:**
  - Children can return to school when the fever is gone. They should also be able to swallow normally.
  - Most children will want to be back to full activity in 2 to 4 weeks.

## Call Your Doctor If

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- Trouble breathing or drooling occurs
- Your child can't drink enough fluids
- Fever lasts more than 7 days
- Stomach pain occurs (especially sharp pain high on the left side)
- Your child isn't back to school by 2 weeks.
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

### **Pediatric Care Advice**

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