

**MSAD # 13 / RSU #83
Health Alert**

**Mononucleosis (Epstein Barr Virus)
Important Notice to Parents**

Individuals with mononucleosis (mono) develop flu-like symptoms that usually go away on their own after a few weeks of rest and plenty of fluids. Mono is usually caused by the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), a very common virus that most individuals are exposed to at some point while growing up. Infants and young children infected with EBV usually have very mild symptoms or none at all. But teens and young adults who become infected often develop mono. Mono is spread through kissing, coughing, sneezing, or any contact with the saliva of someone who has been infected with the virus. (That's how mono got nicknamed "the kissing disease.") It also can spread by sharing a straw or an eating utensil. People who have been infected with EBV will carry the virus for the rest of their lives — even if they never have any signs or symptoms of mono. Those who did have mono symptoms probably will not get sick or have symptoms again. Although EBV is the most common cause of mono, other viruses, such as cytomegalovirus (CMV), can cause a similar illness. Like EBV, cytomegalovirus stays in the body for life and may not cause any symptoms. Mono is **not** highly contagious and there is no specific treatment.

Mono may begin slowly with unexplained tiredness or weakness, fever, headache, and sore throat. The sore throat slowly gets worse. Tonsils may become swollen and develop a whitish-yellow covering. The lymph nodes in the neck are frequently swollen. Other symptoms of mono include: sore muscles, skin rash, and abdominal pain. Younger children with mono may have different combinations of these symptoms, while some teens might have symptoms so mild that they're hardly noticeable. Mono symptoms usually go away on their own within 2 to 4 weeks. In some teens, though, the fatigue and weakness can last for months. To make a diagnosis, the doctor may perform a blood test and physical exam to check for things like swollen tonsils and an enlarged liver or spleen, which often is a sign of the infection.

Most individuals who get mono recover completely with no problem, but in rare cases, complications can occur. These can include problems with the liver or spleen, anemia, meningitis, trouble breathing, or inflammation of the heart.

Mono is transmitted through close person-to-person contact (including sharing of water bottles) and has an incubation period of about 10–50 days.

The infectious period for mono is uncertain, but may be as long as several months.

There is no vaccine for the Epstein-Barr virus, but you can try to protect your children from mono by making sure that they avoid close contact with others who have it. Sometimes people have the virus without any symptoms and can still pass it to others. Teach children to wash their hands often and not to share that may be contaminated with saliva such as drinks, eating utensils, and lipstick even when other individuals seem healthy.

The best treatment for mono is plenty of rest, especially early in the course of the illness when symptoms are the most severe. Drink plenty of fluids and gargle with warm salt water to help ease sore throats. Acetaminophen or ibuprofen can help to relieve the fever and aching muscles. In most cases, the symptoms of mono go away in a matter of weeks with plenty of rest and fluids. If the symptoms seem to linger, or if you have any other questions, talk with your doctor.

Doctors usually recommend that students with mono avoid sports for a specified period of time after symptoms are gone because the spleen is usually enlarged temporarily from the illness. An enlarged spleen can rupture easily — causing internal bleeding, fever, and abdominal pain — and require emergency surgery. Vigorous activities, contact sports, weightlifting, cheerleading, or even wrestling with siblings or friends should be avoided until your doctor gives the OK.

Students should remain at home if they have a temperature over 100.0 degrees, and not return to school until they are fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications and feels well enough to participate in normal activities.

Please contact the school nurse, Mel Chadbourne, RN if you have any questions. More information is also available at the Maine CDC web site.

Updated 3-8-15