

Mononucleosis

Epstein-Barr Virus

Clinical Description:

Mononucleosis is a disease caused by the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV). Symptoms can include fever, exudative pharyngitis, swollen glands, extreme fatigue and atypical lymphocytes in the blood. The spectrum of disease is extremely variable. Infections may go unrecognized in young children, whereas, in older children and young adults, clinical illness with the typical signs and symptoms are more common. An enlarged spleen is also typical in cases among adolescents and young adults. Occasionally, infection may be accompanied by a rash, which is more likely to occur in people treated with ampicillin. Complications may include aseptic meningitis, encephalitis, or Guillian-Barre syndrome. Fatigue lasting a few weeks may follow the infection. EBV also establishes a lifelong dormant infection in some cells of the body's immune system. The virus is a member of the herpesvirus group.

Incubation Period:

From 4 - 6 weeks following exposure.

Mode of Transmission:

Mononucleosis is spread by direct contact with the saliva of an infected person. Most individuals exposed to people with infectious mononucleosis have previously been infected with EBV and are not at risk for infectious mononucleosis.

Period of Communicability:

The period of communicability is indeterminate. A person may spread the virus through the exchange of saliva for many months after infection. In fact, many healthy people can carry and spread the virus intermittently for life. These people are usually the primary reservoir for person-to-person transmission. For this reason, transmission of the virus is difficult to prevent.

Exclusion/Reporting:

EBV and mononucleosis are not reportable to the ISDH. Persons with infectious mononucleosis may be able to spread the infection to others for a period of weeks. However, no special precautions or isolation procedures are recommended, since the virus is also found frequently in the saliva of healthy people. Corporation policies regarding exclusion for fever, etc. should be followed for those infected with EBV and mononucleosis.

Prevention/Care:

- Encourage good personal hygiene and avoid exposure to saliva.
- There is no specific treatment for mononucleosis.
- Some interventions to assist in relief of symptoms include:
 - Ill persons should get plenty of bed rest.
 - Drink lots of water and fruit juices to relieve fever and prevent dehydration.
 - Gargle with salt water to relieve sore throat.

- Consider over-the-counter pain relievers. Do not give aspirin to children under the age of 16 years.

Outbreaks:

According to the ISDH Communicable Disease Reporting Rule (410 IAC 1-2.3) the definition of an outbreak means cases of disease occurring in a community, region, or particular population at a rate in excess of that which is normally expected. The local health department should be notified of suspected and/or documented cases of mononucleosis if the number of cases is in excess of what is normally experienced in your school or occur with a common connection (same class, sports team, etc.). For additional information and recommendations regarding the preparation for, and the management of an outbreak situation in a school setting, see Appendix A, "Managing an Infectious Disease Outbreak In a School Setting."

Other Resources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/ebv.htm>

Indiana State Department of Health Quick Facts Page (found on disease/condition page):

<http://bit.ly/12IJLfd>