Mononucleosis

Mononucleosis, or Mono, is an infection caused by a virus. Mononucleosis can occur at any age, but it is most common in young adults.

What Are The Symptoms?
Persons with mononucleosis can have all or some of these symptoms:
- Headache
- Fever and body aches, especially in the late afternoon or evening
- Feeling tired all the time or getting tired easily
- Severe sore throat
- Swollen glands in the neck that may make it difficult to swallow
- Sometimes a red rash on the body

Your health care provider will be able to determine that you have mononucleosis by examining you and listening to what you say about your symptoms. Often a blood test will confirm that you have mononucleosis.

How Did I Get Mono?
The virus that causes mono is spread through saliva. This usually means that the disease is spread through "intimate" contact such as kissing, sexual intercourse or sharing food, drink or cigarettes. The virus can remain in the saliva for many weeks, usually most people that have had the infection will not get it again.

When to Call Your Doctor:
Complications from mononucleosis are rare. Call your doctor if you have:
- Sudden onset of stomach pain or pain in your upper left side
- Fever of more than 101 degrees for 4 days
- Yellow skin or eyes
- Very dark coloration to your urine
- Symptoms that keep getting worse

Your recovery will usually take two or three weeks. You need to take care of yourself to get better.

How Is Mono Treated?
There is no medicine to treat mono. Treatment is aimed at controlling the symptoms to help you feel better.
- Rest is very important, especially early in the illness. Prioritize your schedule and time commitments. Ensure that you get adequate rest and sleep. Avoid activities that make you tired or feel worse.
- Your spleen may get bigger when you have mononucleosis. Avoid contact sports or heavy lifting because it can cause your spleen to rupture. Check with your doctor before you begin these activities again.
- Continue with some moderate physical activity. Avoid long, difficult projects until after you have recovered.
Throat lozenges or warm salt water gargles can ease the sore throat. Use one teaspoon of table salt in an 8 ounce glass of warm water and gargle as needed.

Drink at least 8 glasses of water, juices, milk shakes, broth, or popsicles. Cool and bland foods, like bananas, applesauce, potatoes, oatmeal, or noodles will be easier to swallow. Avoid fried and greasy foods until you feel better.

Take 2 tablets of 325 mg. strength acetaminophen (Tylenol), every 4 - 6 hours as needed to control your fever. Some people get relief with cool sponge baths or a cool cloth to the forehead.

Massaging the head, neck and scalp can ease the headache. The acetaminophen also can help ease the headache.

If you develop a rash, it usually goes away in a few days and is not uncomfortable. If you have problems, check with your clinician for further evaluation and advice.

You can see friends and family during your illness. Class attendance is not prohibited. Avoid close contact like kissing.

Wash your hands with soap and water often especially after using the bathroom or when you sneeze or cough. These precautions will reduce the spread of the virus.

Are There Complications?
Mono usually causes some inflammation in the liver and spleen. Severe liver inflammation can result in jaundice, a condition where the eyes and skin become yellow and the urine becomes very dark brown in color. People with mono can have so much swelling in their throat that it becomes difficult to eat and drink fluids. If you are unable to drink fluids and become severely dehydrated, hospitalization may be required for treatment.

Rupture of the spleen
is a rare, but serious side effect of mono. The spleen is an organ in the upper left abdomen that stores and filters blood cells. In a Mono infection the spleen tends to enlarge and if someone receives a hard blow to the abdomen, it could result in damage or rupture of the spleen. For this reason, persons with mono are encouraged to avoid contact sports or any activity that could result in trauma to the abdomen for at least 4 weeks after being diagnosed with Mono.

Does My Roommate Need To Worry About Catching Mono From Me?
No, not from casual contact. Mono is a disease that is spread by direct contact with the secretions of the infected person. It is not highly contagious to the general population.

Home Remedies
Gargle: Take a cup of warm water and a teaspoon of salt. Gargle 4-5 times a day to relieve symptoms of pain and swelling
Fluids: Drink 8 to 10 glasses of liquids a day. Water and fruit juices are fine.
Steam: Take a hot steamy shower or use a cold air vaporizer.
Rest: Try to get at least 8 hours of sleep each night.
Food: When you are ill, eat an adequate, well balanced diet, increase fluids and avoid junk foods.
Avoid: Smoking and drinking Alcohol.