

INFECTIOUS MONONUCLEOSIS IN TEENS

Every school year there are students at PHS diagnosed with Mononucleosis. “Mono”, as it is usually called, is caused by the Epstein-Barr virus, which is a member of the herpes virus family and one of the most common human viruses. Mono has been called “the kissing disease” because of the way this disease is spread: through contact with saliva. Thus, sharing water bottles or eating utensils can also spread it. During the acute phase of mono, the teen commonly has fever, malaise, sore throat, and swollen lymph glands. Occasionally, abdominal pain may occur due to a swollen spleen or liver involvement. A student diagnosed with mono should have their spleen palpated by a health care professional before being released to play contact sports to be sure it is no longer enlarged. The student may have fatigue for 4 to 6 weeks after the acute phase is over. They may continue to be mildly contagious. Although the symptoms of infectious mononucleosis usually resolve in 1 or 2 months, the Epstein-Barr virus remains dormant in a few cells of the person’s throat and blood for the rest of their life. Periodically this virus can reactivate and be found in the person’s saliva although they do not have any symptoms. In fact, many healthy people can carry and spread the virus intermittently for life. Thus, transmission of this virus is almost impossible to prevent. Please contact me if you have questions/concerns.

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