

Patient information on Glandular Fever (Infectious Mononucleosis)

Who is this information for?

This information is for patients, families and carers following a diagnosis of glandular fever.

What is Glandular Fever?

Infectious mononucleosis is commonly known as glandular fever. It is a viral infection that is caused by the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV).

Most people are exposed to EBV during childhood, although most infected young children do not develop symptoms. Symptomatic infection is much more common in teenagers and young adults.

It usually lasts 3-4 weeks. Once infected you become immune and cannot be infected again.

The infection is spread via saliva by direct transfer (e.g. kissing) or by airborne droplet (e.g. sneezing). Someone who has glandular fever can remain infectious to others for many months after symptoms have disappeared.

What are the symptoms of glandular fever?

Most young children who become infected with EBV do not develop symptoms.

In contrast, people who are first exposed to EBV as adolescents or adults are more likely to develop symptomatic infection: this is due to the way their immune systems respond to the virus.

The symptoms of glandular fever include:

- fever
- sore throat
- lethargy, severe fatigue
- headache
- enlarged lymph nodes ('glands') in the neck
- rash
- muscle pains
- abdominal pain
- nausea.
- **Enlargement of the spleen**
 - The spleen is an organ in the left upper abdomen, just under the diaphragm.
 - It becomes enlarged in approximately 50% of people with glandular fever

These symptoms usually develop 4-6 weeks after infection.
Most people recover within 2 – 4 weeks.
For some, significant tiredness lasts for weeks to months.

How is Glandular Fever (EBV infection) Diagnosed?

Diagnosis usually involves a combination of history and examination and blood tests. The tonsils are usually very enlarged and coated with a white-creamy yellow film. Sometimes the most commonly used blood test for diagnosis in Australia, known as the *Monospot* can be **negative** during the first weeks of symptoms.

What is the treatment for Glandular Fever?

There is no specific treatment for this condition. In order to maximise recovery the following measures are recommended:

- Ensure plenty of **rest**
 - Glandular can cause severe fatigue
 - Whilst most people recover within 2-4 weeks, for some, significant tiredness lasts for weeks to months
- Relieve **fever & discomfort** with the use of non-prescription analgesia as required (e.g. Paracetamol/Ibuprofen) – ensure you closely follow the dosing instructions.
- Drink plenty of **fluids**
- Avoid strenuous activity during the infection and for six weeks after the symptoms have settled as the spleen may become enlarged (SEE ABOVE) and can be susceptible to injury. Contact sports must not be played during the infection and for six weeks after.
 - N.B. Symptoms of splenic rupture may include: sudden, sharp pain in the abdomen, and feeling faint.
- **Avoid alcohol** during and for six weeks after the infection, as the liver can become inflamed.
- When driving, be mindful to travel short distances as you may tire easily.

What can I do to reduce the chance of infecting others?

During the infection you should:

- Ensure good hygiene, especially with regular handwashing
- Avoid close contact with people (**e.g. kissing**)
- Avoid sharing drink containers and cutlery
- Do not use handkerchiefs - use tissues instead
- Carefully discard soiled tissues

When should I contact my doctor?

After a diagnosis of glandular fever, it is recommended that you contact your health professional if any of the following symptoms develop:

- Abdominal pain
- Bruising
- Rash
- Difficult breathing or difficulty swallowing fluids
- Chest infection
- Intolerance of light

Concerns or questions?

You can contact your ENT Specialist at the Melbourne ENT Group (MEG):

- Phone: 1300- 952-808
- Email: admin@melbentgroup.com.au
- Website: www.melbentgroup.com.au



Your GP is also the best contact for ongoing care and concerns.

Further information

The Victorian State Government has published further information on Infectious Mononucleosis on their website which can be accessed by the following link:

[Http://ideas.health.vic.gov.au/bluebook/mononucleosis.asp](http://ideas.health.vic.gov.au/bluebook/mononucleosis.asp)



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