

Mononucleosis Factsheet (for Schools)

What Teachers Should Know

Mononucleosis, or mono, is caused by the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), a common virus that most kids are exposed to at some point while growing up. Infants and young kids infected with EBV usually have very mild symptoms or none at all. But teens and young adults who become infected often develop mono symptoms. The flu-like symptoms caused by mono usually go away on their own after a few weeks of rest.

Mono (sometimes called the "kissing disease") is spread through kissing, coughing, sneezing, and any contact with the saliva of a contagious person — such as sharing a straw, drinking glass, eating utensil, or toothbrush.

Mono symptoms include fever, sore throat with swollen tonsils, being very tired, and swollen lymph nodes. These symptoms can be mistaken for strep throat or the flu.

Other symptoms include:

- headache
- sore muscles
- lack of appetite
- skin rash
- belly pain

Students with mono might need to:

- miss school for several weeks
- do all homework and assignments at home and have tests rescheduled
- avoid gym class and sports until they get cleared by a doctor (the virus can cause the spleen to enlarge, creating a risk of rupture)
- modify their school day due to tiredness or other symptoms

What Teachers Can Do

Mono needs to run its course naturally. Symptoms usually last 2–4 weeks, but some students feel tired and weak for months.

If students with mono are absent for a long time, try to find ways for them to keep up with assignments so they don't fall behind and feel overwhelmed when they return to school.

To help prevent the spread of infections in their classrooms, teachers can:

- Encourage students to wash their hands with soap and water often.
- Remind students to always cough or sneeze into their elbow or a tissue, not their hands.
- Remind students to not share drinks, straws, eating utensils, or similar personal items.

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