

# Glandular Fever

An infection caused by the Epstein Barr virus (EBV). It is also called Infectious Mononucleosis and sometimes the 'Kissing Disease'. Once a person catches Epstein Barr virus, it is believed that the virus remains in their body for life, though it usually does not cause further illness. By adulthood, 90-95% of people have EBV.

Symptoms of acute glandular fever include:

- > fever
- > sore throat
- > swollen glands
- > abdominal pain and jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes) occur less frequently.

Symptomatic infection most often occurs in older children and young adults. When the infection occurs in young children, symptoms are mild or absent. Up to 50% of people infected have no symptoms of infection at all. The illness can last between one and several weeks and very rarely a chronic form develops. Illness can be more severe in those who have lowered immunity and in some ethnic groups serious complications may occur many years after the initial infection.

The diagnosis is made by a blood test.

The disease is spread from person-to-person through contact with saliva. Young children may be infected by saliva on the hands of care givers or by sucking and sharing toys, but the virus does not survive very well in the environment. Kissing results in spread among young adults.

## Incubation period

*(time between becoming infected and developing symptoms)*

4 – 6 weeks.

## Infectious period

*(time during which an infected person can infect others)*

Not accurately known. The virus is shed in the saliva for up to a year after illness and intermittently thereafter.

## Treatment

Seek medical advice if difficulty with swallowing or abdominal pain occurs. Medication for control of fever may be required. There is no effective antiviral drug available. Contact sports and heavy lifting should be avoided for the first month after illness because of risk of damage to the spleen, which often is enlarged during acute infection. Most patients with glandular fever recover uneventfully.



**Aspirin should not be given to children under 12 years of age unless specifically recommended by a doctor.**

## Control of spread

- > People with glandular fever do not need to be excluded from school or work. They should return whenever they feel able.
- > Follow good hand washing techniques.
- > Minimise contact with saliva.
- > Avoid sharing cups and glasses.
- > There is no vaccine available to prevent Epstein Barr virus infection.