

WHAT IS INFECTIOUS MONONUCLEOSIS?

Infectious mononucleosis is either caused by the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV) or the cytomegalovirus, both of which are members of the herpes simplex virus family. Its spread and impact is vast:

Most adults in the U.S. have been exposed to the Epstein-Barr virus, which is a very common virus. When children are infected with the virus, they usually do not experience any noticeable symptoms. However, uninfected adolescents and young adults who come into contact with the virus may develop infectious mononucleosis in nearly 50 percent of exposures. The cytomegalovirus is actually a group of viruses in the herpes simplex virus family that often cause cells to enlarge. About 80 percent of adults who are infected with the cytomegalovirus usually do not develop symptoms.

Mononucleosis usually lasts for one to two months, during which time an individual can experience one or more of the following symptoms: fever; swollen lymph glands in the neck, armpits and groin; constant fatigue; and sore throat due to tonsillitis, which often makes swallowing difficult.

WHAT CAUSES MONONUCLEOSIS?

Mononucleosis is often spread through contact with infected saliva from the mouth. Symptoms can take between four and six weeks to appear and usually do not last beyond four months. Transmission is impossible to prevent because even symptom-free people can carry the virus in their saliva. Testing involves a simple blood test, and should be conducted when a person exhibits two or more symptoms and/or when that person has reason to believe he or she may have been exposed to mononucleosis.

WHAT CAN A BLOOD TEST TELL ME ABOUT MONONUCLEOSIS?

The monospot test detects certain antibodies, which are made in response to an infection caused by the Epstein-Barr virus. Because test results are generally not definitive until you have been infected for approximately two weeks, additional blood tests may be ordered.

WHAT IS VIRAL HEPATITIS?

Viral hepatitis is any type of liver inflammation caused by a virus or viral infection. A healthy liver performs many functions, including processing nutrients, manufacturing bile to help digest fats and breaking down potentially harmful substances into harmless ones that the body can use or excrete. A damaged liver can't perform these functions efficiently, and toxic, or harmful, substances may accumulate in the bloodstream. Hepatitis A, hepatitis B and hepatitis C are the three most common viral causes of liver disease. All forms of hepatitis are characterized by some type of jaundice (yellowing of the skin), fatigue or moderate nausea.

WHAT CAUSES VIRAL HEPATITIS?

Hepatitis A, also called infectious hepatitis, is generally mild. It is most often spread by food and water contamination, but can also be transmitted through sexual contact. Hepatitis B causes the most common acute hepatitis in the United States. It is usually spread by sexual contact with another infected person, contact with infected blood, intravenous drug use or from mother to child at birth.

Hepatitis C is also generally mild, but often leads to chronic liver disease, liver failure or liver cancer. Although it can be spread through sexual contact or by sharing drug needles, the origin of hepatitis C is often not traceable.

WHAT CAN A BLOOD TEST TELL ME ABOUT VIRAL HEPATITIS?

An acute hepatitis or liver panel contains tests for a number of enzymes produced by the liver. Elevated enzyme levels can indicate damage to liver cells, decreasing the liver's ability to perform its functions.

*For more information regarding the services provided by the Pathology Center,
call (402) 354-4541 or (888) 432-8980.*

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