

Glandular Fever (Infectious Mononucleosis)

Community and Public Health

Phone: 03 364 1777

Web: www.cph.co.nz

Glandular Fever is a viral disease that affects certain types of white blood cells (mononuclear cells), so is also known as Infectious Mononucleosis. It is caused by the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV)—a type of herpes virus. Most cases occur sporadically and outbreaks are rare.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms appear 4 to 6 weeks after exposure to the virus, and can include:

- Fever;
- Sore throat;
- Swollen glands;
- Fatigue;
- Loss of appetite; and
- Jaundice.

Recovery usually occurs within several weeks, although some people can take months to fully recover.

Sometimes the liver and spleen are affected and the disease is almost never fatal.

How is it caught or spread?

The virus is spread by person-to-person contact via saliva—on hands or toys, or by kissing). It is also found in the nasal secretions of children and adults who have the virus.

The virus is released from the throat during the illness, and for a year or more after infection in up to 20% of people. An infected person is able to spread glandular fever during this time.

Who is at risk?

Most people are exposed to the Epstein-Barr virus at some point in their lives, so very few go on to develop the symptoms of glandular fever.

When infection occurs during adolescence or young adulthood, it causes glandular fever around 35 to 50% of the time.

How is it treated?

No treatment other than rest is needed in most cases. Antibiotics are not effective against viruses.

Paracetamol may be helpful in the early stages to relieve symptoms.



How is spread prevented?

Avoid activities involving contact with body fluids, such as saliva, from someone who is currently or has recently been infected with the virus.

Methods of saliva spread can include kissing and sharing any of the following:

- eating utensils
- drink bottles
- lip balm
- cigarettes etc.

Frequent and thorough handwashing will also help prevent spread of the virus.

Currently, there is no vaccine available to prevent glandular fever.

Staying away from work, school or preschool

People who have had the illness can return to work, school or preschool as soon as they feel well enough to attend.

For further information, contact:

- Your local doctor or practice nurse;
- Your local Public Health Nurse; or
- A Health Protection Officer at Community and Public Health.

Other resources available on infectious illnesses:

- Campylobacter, E. coli and Salmonella
- Conjunctivitis
- Norovirus
- Ringworm
- Whooping cough (Pertussis)
- Viral Meningitis

Image sourced from Stuff.co.nz website.

Community and Public Health: Community Health Information Centres

Christchurch

Phone: 03 378 6721

Fax: 03 379 6125

chic@cdhb.health.nz

Ashburton

Phone: 03 307 6902

Fax: 03 307 8081

ashburton.chic@cdhb.health.nz

Timaru

Phone: 03 687 2600

Fax: 03 688 6091

timaru.chic@cdhb.health.nz

Greymouth

Phone: 03 768 1160

Fax: 03 768 1169

westcoast.chic@cdhb.health.nz