

Almost anyone, at any age, can get glandular fever, however, it most commonly occurs in mid to late adolescence and early adulthood. Studies suggest the infection occurs slightly more often in males than in females. Chris Rhodes diagnosed Glandular Fever and Epstein-Barr virus (EBV) in Auriel and me at ages 84, when we knew nothing about it, so studied it. We suffered no pains, but had not fully recovered from our hospitalisation, Auriel from a fall, and me from a small intestine twist removal, both leaving us with bad balance and tiredness.

Glandular fever (also known as infectious mononucleosis) causes symptoms similar to influenza (the flu) that vary in all aspects between people, and can persist for several weeks or months.

It is caused by the EBV, which is a member of the herpes virus family. Most people will be exposed to the EBV, and should have developed some degree of immunity to it, by the time they reach adulthood.

Signs and Symptoms

The incubation period for glandular fever is relatively lengthy. The first signs and symptoms of the infection may not appear until approximately four to eight weeks after exposure to the virus.

Symptoms are generally at their worst about a week after they first appear and most symptoms will have resolved within three weeks. However, the severity and duration of symptoms can vary considerably between individuals. Symptoms are generally less severe in young children, who may have either no symptoms or only a mild flu-like illness. The older the person when they develop glandular fever, the more severe the symptoms are likely to be. It is possible for symptoms to persist for several weeks and even for months.

- Loss of appetite.
- Chills.
- Mental and physical fatigue and weakness.
- Aching muscles.

[The following can follow 2 to 3 days later -](#)

- Fever
- Headache
- Sore, reddened throat with enlarged tonsils
- Swollen glands in the neck, armpits and/or groin.
- A rash, especially on the chest.
- Enlargement of the lymph nodes.

The spleen is enlarged in about 50% of cases and the liver is enlarged in about 20% of cases. In a small percentage of cases a blotchy red rash can occur. Jaundice occurs rarely, and, when it does, it generally lasts only 1 to 2 days.

Symptoms are similar to influenza (flu), but vary in severity, and can persist for several weeks or months, and include fatigue, headache and abdominal pains with nausea or vomiting, red or white spots on the roof of the mouth, enlarged tonsils and swollen neck lymph nodes. Older adults may suffer prolonged serious illness with fever, jaundice, fatigue, body pains and liver enlargement.

The doctor is likely to take blood tests to check for the presence of the EBV. A blood test performed in the early stage of glandular fever may return a negative result. For this reason the doctor may recommend further blood tests a few days later.

Diagnosis

The doctor may take a full history of the symptoms and perform a physical examination. This will include an assessment of whether there is -

- Fever
- Redness of the throat and swelling of the tonsils
- Enlargement of the lymph nodes
- Enlargement of the spleen
- A rash (especially on the chest).

Possible complications

Rarely, glandular fever can lead to complications that affect other body systems. These include -

- Inflammation of the heart muscle (myocarditis)
- Inflammation of the sac that surrounds the heart (pericarditis)
- Inflammation of the brain (encephalitis)
- Pneumonia
- Rupture of the spleen
- Destruction of red blood cells and/or platelets.

In some people, glandular fever can lead to symptoms associated with chronic fatigue syndrome. This syndrome leaves the person feeling tired, weak and listless. The symptoms can continue for an extended period after the infection seems to have cleared, but this is not common.

As glandular fever is caused by a virus, there is no specific treatment, and antibiotics are of no help. It is considered to be a self-limiting infection which goes with time. Pain and discomfort can usually be adequately treated with pain relief medications. In severe cases mild painkillers like Aspro may be prescribed to reduce pain and swelling of the lymph nodes.

Occasionally the sore throat present with glandular fever can be associated with strep throat, caused by streptococcal bacteria. Antibiotics may be prescribed in these cases in order to combat the bacteria.

An enlarged spleen can be easily damaged. For this reason it is recommended that strenuous activity and exercise, as well as contact sports, be avoided for at least four weeks after the first symptoms appear, or until the spleen returns to a normal size.

As glandular fever can cause the liver to become enlarged, it is important to avoid alcohol while the condition is present.

Pain Killers

Pain is not critical as it is with Shingles. The newer pain killers Paracetamol, Panadeine and Panadol help, but, as I found when suffering Shingles, may contain mercury, a major toxin causing 'Attention Deficit' in children of pregnant mothers who took them as pain killers. Mercury causes sore joints, pimples, boils and things caused by amalgam in teeth. Read about mercury in Human Health Minerals, and about Lead and Cadmium.

Pains warn you to stop doing something, so I'm against pain killers except for headaches and similar. When I had shingles with BAD pains, I stopped using pain killers because their side effects of boils and joint damage were worse.

Sore Throat

Antibiotics may be prescribed if you develop a secondary bacterial infection of the throat.

Gargling with salt water may help relieve the symptoms of a sore throat. Mix half a teaspoon of salt (2.5g) with a quarter of a litre (eight ounces) of water.

Honey in warm water is also a soother, and Manuka honey in warm water can be a healer of sore throats and the oesophagus.

If you are over 16 years old, you may find dissolving aspirin in water provides some additional benefit. Children under 16 should not take aspirins.

If taking an antibiotic which can upset digestion, our excellent chemist recommended taking one Inner Health vegetable Probiotic capsule, which contains 25 billion bacteria, per day. I don't know what age she was when she started counting. I say 'she', because males don't usually have the patience to finish such long tasks. Two decades ago I was prescribed Clyndamyacin which upset my stomach dreadfully for a month until taking a Probiotic, which fixed it in 24 hours.

Avoid Falling

For the first month after your symptoms begin, avoid contact sports or activities that put you at risk of falling. This is because if you have a swollen spleen, it is more vulnerable to damage and a sudden knock could cause it to rupture.

Rest

Getting plenty of rest and drinking lots of clean, pure, safe water (Read Water in Human Health) is very important. Get plenty of rest for the first two to three weeks after your glandular fever symptoms start, however, complete bed rest is no longer recommended, as it can make the symptoms of fatigue last longer.

You should gradually increase your activities as your energy levels return, but it is important to avoid activities you cannot manage comfortably.

Transmission of the Virus

Glandular fever is not considered to be a highly infectious condition. The transmission of saliva from one person to another is the most common way of spreading the virus. Because of this, glandular fever is often called “the kissing disease”. Coughing and sneezing, as well as sharing drink bottles and utensils, can spread the virus. The virus can also be transmitted through blood transfusion and organ transplantation.

The virus remains in the mouth and throat for some time after a person has recovered. It is estimated that a person remains infectious for up to a year after contracting glandular fever. Because of this, person to person transmission is difficult to trace.

After an episode of glandular fever the EBV lies latent in the cells of the body for life. Infection with the virus is usually sufficient to provide long-term immunity from the condition. However it is possible for the condition to recur. If it does, it's usually in the first year following the initial infection.

There is no cure for glandular fever. In most cases, the majority of the symptoms should pass within four to six weeks without treatment. Fatigue can sometimes persist for longer. In most people, fatigue will end after three months. Full recovery is usual.

Complications

These are uncommon in glandular fever, but can be serious. They include a ruptured spleen, which would require emergency surgery, or a secondary infection of the lungs such as pneumonia.

Vaughan Jones, ONZM Queen's honour, for services to the farming industry.

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