GLANDULAR FEVER

What is it?

Glandular fever is caused by a virus (Epstein Barr virus) and is also known as “infectious mononucleosis”. It occurs most frequently in teenagers and young adults but generally it is not a serious illness.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms are fatigue, sore throat, fever, faint rash and enlargement of the glands in the neck. Tonsillitis and mild jaundice can sometimes occur. Some people have glandular fever without noticing any symptoms at all, whilst others may be unwell for several weeks.

Is it infectious?

Yes. The virus is present in saliva and is therefore spread by salivary contact. In teenagers and young adults it is most often spread by kissing. People can remain infectious for several months.

What is the incubation period?

It is usually between 4 and 6 weeks. Often the illness is caught from someone who has no symptoms.

Is there any treatment?

There is no specific treatment but most people recover very quickly after a few days’ rest. A few people do feel a bit tired and run down for up to a month or two. The person should rest and take prescribed paracetamol while there is a fever.

Should people avoid any specific activities while they have glandular fever?

Not really. People who are feeling unwell or tired should avoid strenuous activity.

How soon can someone return to school or work?

As soon as they feel well. Many people will not need to take any time off at all.

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