



HEALTH INFORMATION

Glandular fever

What is glandular fever?

Glandular Fever is a viral infection caused by the Epstein-Barr virus. This virus can be passed from person to person by close contact (especially kissing). It can possibly also be caught by sharing cups, toothbrushes, etc. It can take up to six weeks for the symptoms to develop after first being infected with this virus. This is called the incubation period.

Glandular fever can affect people of any age, but is most common in young adults and teenagers. The immune system makes antibodies during the infection. This then usually provides lifelong immunity. This means that it is rare to have more than one episode of glandular fever.

How is glandular fever diagnosed?

- The symptoms caused by glandular fever are similar to symptoms due to various other viruses. Therefore, it can be difficult to diagnose glandular fever just by a doctor examining you. A blood test is commonly done that can detect a particular antibody and confirm if you have glandular fever. If your blood test is negative but your doctor suspects you have glandular fever then you may have your blood test repeated a few weeks later.

What is the treatment for glandular fever?

- Usually, no specific treatment is needed. However, it is important to have plenty to drink. It is often tempting not to drink very much if it is painful to swallow. This can lead to mild dehydration, particularly if you also have a fever. Mild dehydration can make headaches and tiredness much worse. It can be worthwhile taking paracetamol or ibuprofen to ease pain, headache and fever.

- To prevent spread, you should avoid kissing and close body contact with other people whilst you are ill. It is also best not to share cups, towels, etc, whilst you are ill. You should see your doctor if any unusual, severe or unexplained symptoms develop.
- A full recovery is usual within a couple of weeks. Some people have a lingering tiredness that lasts a few weeks, sometimes longer. It is rare to have glandular fever again.

What are the symptoms of glandular fever

One or more of the following symptoms commonly occur for about a week or so. Symptoms then usually gradually settle over another week.

- Sore throat
- Swollen glands
- Flu-like symptoms
- Swelling around eyes
- Malaise
- Spleen - This is an organ under the ribs on the left side of the abdomen. It is part of the immune system. Like the lymph glands, it swells and can sometimes be felt below the ribs if you have glandular fever. Very occasionally, it causes mild pain in the upper left abdomen.
- No symptoms - Many people become infected with this virus but do not develop symptoms. This is called a subclinical infection. This is more common in children and those aged over 40 years.