

Glandular fever

(Epstein–Barr virus, infectious mononucleosis)

Glandular fever is caused by Epstein–Barr virus. Once a person catches Epstein–Barr virus, the virus remains in their body for life, although it usually does not cause further sickness. By adulthood, 90% to 95% of people have Epstein–Barr virus.

Most people will not have any symptoms, including children under 3 years old. Older children and young adults may develop symptoms including fever, tiredness, sore throat and swollen glands. Some people develop stomach pain and yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice), or a red, itchy rash. Symptoms can last for several weeks, and some people may feel tired for months after the infection.

How it spreads

Epstein–Barr virus spreads from person to person through contact with saliva, such as through kissing, sharing utensils and drinks, or coughing and sneezing. Young children may be infected by saliva on the hands of caregivers, or by sucking and sharing toys; however, the virus does not survive very well in the environment.

Exclusion period

Not excluded – people with glandular fever can attend the service.

Actions for educators and other staff

Ensure staff and children have good respiratory and hand hygiene.

Ensure staff use appropriate cleaning practices, as described in the *Staying healthy* guidelines.

Actions for parents and carers

If your child feels sick, keep them at home until their symptoms have gone.

Do not share utensils and drinks. Encourage your child to wash their hands regularly.

Teach your child to cough or sneeze into a tissue, then throw the tissue into a bin and wash their hands. If there are no tissues nearby, teach them to cough or sneeze into their inner elbow instead of their hands.

More information about glandular fever

See healthdirect for more information on prevention, diagnosis and treatment of glandular fever (healthdirect.gov.au/glandular-fever).

To find out if a child needs medical help:

- use the online symptom checker (healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker)
- speak to a registered nurse by calling the 24-hour health advice hotline on 1800 022 222.