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Epstein-Barr Virus

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Definition

Epstein-Barr virus, frequently referred to as EBV, is a member of the herpesvirus family and one of the most common human viruses. The virus occurs worldwide, and most people become infected with EBV sometime during their lives. In the United States, approximately 95% of adults have been infected.

Infection with EBV often results in mononucleosis. Symptoms of infectious mononucleosis are fever, sore throat, and swollen lymph glands. Although the symptoms of infectious mononucleosis usually resolve quickly, EBV remains dormant or latent in blood cells for lifetime.

Evaluation and Treatment

The clinical diagnosis of infectious mononucleosis is based on symptoms of fever, sore throat, swollen lymph glands, and the age of the patient. Usually, laboratory tests are needed for

confirmation. Serologic results for persons with infectious mononucleosis include an elevated white blood cell count, an increased percentage of certain atypical white blood cells, and a positive reaction to a “mono spot” test.

There is no specific treatment for infectious mononucleosis other than treating the symptoms. Symptoms related to infectious mononucleosis caused by EBV infection seldom last for more than 4 months. When the illness lasts for more than 6 months, it is called chronic EBV infection. However, valid laboratory evidence for continued active EBV infection is seldom found in these patients. Chronic symptoms should be investigated further to determine if they meet the criteria for chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS). This process includes ruling out other causes of chronic illness or fatigue.

Cross-References

► [Chronic Fatigue Syndrome](#)

References and Readings

National Center for Infectious Diseases Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Webpage at www.cdc.gov/epstein-barr/index.html. Updated Jan 7, 2014.