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My sister has mononucleosis. I drank out of her drink before we found out that she had it. Does this mean that I have mono now?

– Kyle*

Mono, or mononucleosis, is spread through direct contact with saliva. This includes sharing eating utensils or drinks.

Because it takes about 30-50 days for symptoms to appear, a person who's infected can spread the virus without even knowing it. Though no one really knows exactly how long it takes after infection with the virus for someone to become contagious, it's pretty safe to say that a person is most contagious from right before symptoms start until they go away.

If you've shared drinks with or kissed someone who has mono, there's no way to tell whether you will get it — unless you know you've had mono before. People who have already been infected with the virus that causes mono — Epstein-Barr virus or EBV — probably won't get reinfected because they develop immunity. (Although it is possible for the virus to "reactivate," it's not because someone infects you all over again. It's because in rare cases the original virus can flare up and cause symptoms a second time).

About 95% of adults have been infected with EBV and 50% of kids are infected before age 5. So you may very well have already had mono and not known it.

If you do get the symptoms of mono — such as fever, sore throat, and tiredness — contact your doctor to find out whether you need an appointment. If so, your doctor will examine you and may also do a blood test for mono. Other viruses and some bacterial infections — such as strep — may cause similar symptoms.

If I had mononucleosis 5 years ago, can I still give it to someone? I kissed this guy 4 days ago, and he is saying that I gave him mono already! Is this possible?

– Jada*

Although the virus that causes mono stays in the body for the rest of a person's life, that person does not stay contagious forever. Experts believe that people are most contagious from right before their mono symptoms start until the symptoms go away. Most doctors recommend that people avoid kissing or sharing utensils for about 6 months after they feel better. It's *very unlikely* that a person is still contagious 5 years after symptoms are gone.

So chances are you didn't give your guy mono. Another clue that he didn't get the infection from you is that it usually takes 30–50 days after infection for the symptoms of mono to show up — not 4 days!

For more information, check out these articles:

[How Long Is Mono Contagious?](#)

[Mononucleosis](#)

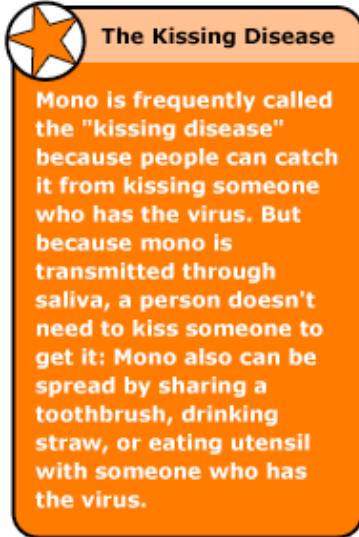
[Can a Person Get Mono More Than Once?](#)

Reviewed by: [Larissa Hirsch, MD](#)

Date reviewed: September 2006

There's a good reason why lots of people are confused about how long mono is contagious. That's because the way mono works within the body is tricky.

Mono is short for mononucleosis. It is caused by an infection with the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), a virus in the herpes family of viruses.



Once someone gets mono, the virus stays in that person's body for life. **But this doesn't mean that if you've had mono you are always contagious.** Over time, the virus becomes less contagious. Eventually, it's very unlikely that a person who had mono will transmit the virus to someone else.

People who have mono can be contagious from the time they first become infected with the virus. But they may not know that they have the virus in its early stages. That's because it takes a while from the time a person is infected to the time symptoms of monosymptoms of mono show up — about 4 to 7 weeks in fact. (This is called the **incubation period**.)

To make it even more confusing, some people can carry the virus without having any symptoms of mono, so they might not know they have the infection at all.

Mono needs to run its course naturally over about 2 to 4 weeks — and some people feel tired for several weeks longer. It's important to [take care of yourself](#) if you have mono and get lots of rest.

Doctors and researchers aren't exactly sure how long someone with mono stays contagious after symptoms are gone. But it's generally believed that a person can spread the infection for many months after the symptoms are completely gone — some studies show as long as 18 months. But after that, it's very unlikely that a person will give someone else mono.

Reviewed by: [Larissa Hirsch, MD](#)

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