



Cytomegalovirus Fact Sheet

What is Cytomegalovirus (CMV)?

CMV is a common virus that infects most people at some time during their lives but rarely causes illness. CMV is a member of the herpes virus family that can “hide” in your body without causing illness but can reappear later and cause illness.

Who gets CMV?

Anyone. Many adults may have already been infected at some time during their life.

How is CMV spread?

CMV is spread from person to person by direct contact. It can be found in the urine, saliva, blood, semen and possibly in other body fluids. The virus can spread from an infected mother to her fetus or newborn baby. CMV can also be spread by blood transfusion and organ transplants.

What are the symptoms of CMV infection?

Most children and adults who are infected with CMV do not become ill. Those who do may have fever, swollen glands and feel tired. Immunocompromised people (such as AIDS patients or those receiving cancer treatments) may have a more serious illness such as pneumonia. About 1 of every 200 babies born in the U.S. will be infected with CMV at birth and 1 out of 5 will have birth defects or other long-term health problems.

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How soon after infection do symptoms appear?

If symptoms develop, they may occur between 3 and 12 weeks after infection. However, most people never become ill.

How long can an infected person carry CMV?

CMV may remain in the body throughout the person's lifetime. The virus may be found in the urine or saliva of infected people who may or may not be ill.

How is CMV diagnosed?

A blood test is used by the doctor to determine if a person has been infected with CMV.

What is the treatment for CMV infections?

There is usually no treatment for CMV infections.

Should an infected person be excluded from school or work?

No.

What precautions should pregnant women take?

Pregnant women should carefully wash their hands after handling wet diapers or having contact with urine or saliva. Pregnant women working in childcare centers should not kiss babies or young children on the mouth. Hugging is OK. Pregnant women should ask their doctor about CMV infections.

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What can be done to stop the spread of CMV?

Good handwashing is the best way to prevent infection with CMV. Health care workers should wear plastic disposable gloves when handling sheets or clothes soiled with the feces or urine of persons who are ill.

*For further information, contact the
Oklahoma City-County Health Department
(405) 425-4437*

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