

Cytomegalovirus (CMV)



What Is It?

CMV is a very common infection caused by a virus and with which most people eventually become infected. CMV can be dangerous for people with immune problems and pregnant women who can spread the illness to their unborn babies. It occurs commonly among children in child care.

What Are the Symptoms?

Children usually have no symptoms when they become infected with CMV. Occasionally, older children in child care will develop an illness with a fever, sore throat, swollen glands (lymph nodes) in the neck, enlarged liver, rash, and tiredness. However these symptoms are very rare, especially in young children in child care.

Who Gets It and How?

CMV is spread from person to person by direct contact with bodily fluids such as blood, urine or saliva. Thus, it may be spread through close contact such as in diaper changing, kissing, feeding, bathing and other activities where a healthy person comes in contact with the urine or saliva of an infected person. CMV can also be passed from a mother to the child before birth. Children and staff in the child care setting are especially likely to be infected. Some people infected with CMV are contagious for a very short time; others can spread the virus for months to years.

When Should People with this Illness Be Excluded?

There is no reason to exclude the child from child care, because the program probably has other children who have CMV.

Is It a Problem for Pregnant Woman?

If infected for the first time during pregnancy, women are at a small risk of delivering an infant with CMV disease which can cause hearing loss, mental retardation and other birth defects.

Female child care providers who are not preventing pregnancy should be tested for immunity against CMV. If the test shows no evidence of previous CMV infection:

- Reduce contact with infected children by working, at least temporarily, with children age 2 years or older, among whom there is far less virus circulation.
- Carefully wash hands with warm water and soap after each diaper change and after contact with children's saliva.
- Avoid contact with children's saliva by not kissing children on the lips and by not placing children's hands, fingers, toys and other saliva-contaminated (soiled) objects in their own mouths.

Remember! Contact with children that does not involve exposure to saliva or urine poses no risk to a mother or child care provider and should not be avoided out of fear of potential infection with CMV.

How Can I Limit the Spread of CMV?

- Make sure that all children and staff use good hand washing practices.
- Follow universal precautions in the child care setting.
- Clean and disinfect all mouthed toys and frequently used surfaces on a daily basis.
- Don't kiss children on the mouth.
- Do not share food, pacifiers, bottles, toothbrushes, eating utensils or drinking cups.

Because of the risk of CMV infection in child care staff members and the potential consequences of infection for female staff members, those who are pregnant or not preventing pregnancy should discuss the issue with their health care provider.