

FACTS ABOUT CYTOMEGALOVIRUS (CMV)

What is CMV?

Cytomegalovirus, or CMV, is a very common viral illness in young children. For most healthy people, CMV infection is not a serious problem. Most people have been infected by the time they are 40 years old.

What are the symptoms of CMV?

Most people have no symptoms when infected with CMV. Yet, the virus remains in the body for life. It is found in body fluids such as urine, saliva, blood, tears, semen and breast milk. Occasionally, children or adults with CMV have mild symptoms that may include fever, swollen glands, enlarged liver, and fatigue.

How is CMV spread?

CMV is spread from person to person by direct contact with body fluids of an infected person. Although it is not very contagious, it has been known to spread to household members and among children in child care where activities like diaper changing, kissing, and feeding occur.

Who is at risk from CMV?

For women of child bearing age who previously have not had CMV, there is a potential risk that the unborn child may get infected. This can lead to problems such as hearing loss, vision impairment and varying degrees of mental retardation. Pregnant women working with infants and young children should be informed of the risk of acquiring CMV infection, the possible effects on the unborn child, and the precautions they can take. They do not need to be transferred to other work situations.

How is CMV diagnosed?

Most infections are not diagnosed because the virus produces few, if any, symptoms. However, a blood test can determine whether a person has been infected with CMV. The virus can be cultured from samples of urine, throat swabs, and tissue samples to detect active infection.

How is CMV treated?

There is currently no treatment for CMV infection in a healthy person. Antiviral drug therapy is used for patients with a weakened immune system who have either sight-related or life-threatening conditions.

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How can the spread of CMV be reduced?

1. Close attention to hygiene practices, such as hand washing and diapering may reduce the risk of infection.
2. Adults can avoid contact with children's saliva by not kissing children on the lips and by not placing children's hands, fingers, toys, or pacifiers in their own mouths. Also avoid sharing food, utensils, or cups with young children.

Exclude from group setting?

Children or adults with known CMV infection do not need to be excluded from child care or school.

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