

Cytomegalovirus

FACTSHEET

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Division of Epidemiology, Disease Surveillance and Investigation
899 N. Capitol Street, NE, Suite 580
Washington, D.C. 20002
202-442-9371 Fax 202-442-8060 *
www.dchealth.dc.gov

What is CMV?

CMV is a viral disease, which may affect various organs of the body, but is usually harmless to most people. Most people have been exposed to this virus by adulthood and have had no symptoms of illness or harm from this virus. The virus that causes this disease remains alive, but usually dormant (not active) within that person's body for life. Recurrent disease rarely occurs unless the person's immune system is suppressed due to therapeutic drugs or disease. For most people, CMV is not a serious infection.

Who gets CMV?

CMV is a virus with which most people eventually become infected. Children and staff in a childcare setting are especially likely to be infected.

What are the symptoms of CMV?

Children usually have no symptoms when they become infected with CMV. Occasionally, older children and adults usually develop an illness similar to mononucleosis, with a fever, sore throat, enlarged liver, and a feeling of being weak and tired.

How is CMV spread?

CMV is spread from person to person in several ways:

Infection requires close, intimate contact with an infected person who is excreting the virus in their saliva, urine, or other bodily fluids

- CMV can be sexually transmitted
- CMV can be transmitted from a mother to her infant in breast milk
- CMV can be transmitted by infected transplanted organs
- CMV can be transmitted through blood transfusions, but this is rare
- CMV can be transmitted through kissing, diaper changing, feeding, and bathing
- CMV can be transmitted from a pregnant woman to her unborn child. This is called "congenital" and can result in serious problems for the unborn child.
- CMV can be transmitted from a mother to her child during a vaginal delivery.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Illness following an organ transplant or transfusion with infected blood begins within 3 to 8 weeks. The symptoms usually occur within five to sixty days after exposure. Infection acquired during birth is usually first seen 3 to 12 weeks after delivery.

Is a person with CMV contagious?

Yes, a person with CMV is contagious. The virus is excreted in saliva, urine and other bodily fluids.

Should a person with CMV be excluded from work or school?

Since most children with CMV have no symptoms and the disease is common in the community it is not necessary to exclude them from school. Older children and adults who have symptoms of CMV should be allowed to work as long as they feel well enough.

How is CMV treated?

Currently, no treatment is necessary for CMV infections in healthy individuals. Antiviral drug therapy is now being evaluated in infants, and is being used in people who have suppressed immune systems with sight-related or life-threatening illnesses.

How can CMV be prevented?

CMV can be prevented by the following:

- Careful handling of diapers
- Wash hands often and thoroughly with soap and water, but especially after diaper changes and toilet care of newborns and infants
- Observe strict standards of hygiene, especially hand washing
- Women considering becoming pregnant should discuss their CMV status and occupational risk with their physician. Pregnant women should remember that good personnel hygiene is an important prevention tool.
- Avoid transfusing blood and transplanting organs from positive donors to negative recipients.

Want more information?

Information about CMV and other related health topics can be found at the website www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please call 202-442-5842.

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