



CYTOMEGALOVIRUS (CMV)

What is CYTOMEGALOVIRUS (CMV)?

Cytomegalovirus (CMV) is a common virus that infects people of all ages. Once CMV is in a person's body, it stays there for life. CMV is a member of the herpesvirus family which includes the herpes simplex viruses and the viruses that cause chickenpox and mononucleosis (mono). The virus is not associated with food, water or animals.

CMV is the most common congenital (present at birth) viral infection in the U.S. Each year about 1 in 750 babies are born with, or develop, disabilities that result from congenital CMV. Approximately 10 percent of congenitally infected infants have symptoms at birth, and of the 90 percent who have no symptoms, 10-15 percent will develop symptoms over months or even years.

Who is at risk for CMV?

Anyone can become infected with CMV. Unborn babies and people with weakened immune systems are at higher risk of getting CMV.

How is CMV spread?

CMV is spread from person to person by direct contact such as when kissing, through sexual contact and getting saliva or urine on your hands and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Transmission can also occur through blood transfusions and organ transplants and from an infected mother to her fetus or newborn through breast milk.

What are the symptoms of CMV?

Most healthy adults and children who have CMV have no obvious symptoms. Those who develop symptoms may experience fever, sore throat, swollen glands and feel tired.

How is CMV diagnosed?

Most CMV infections are not diagnosed because the infected person usually has few or no symptoms. A blood test can detect the virus, but it is not commonly ordered by the medical community.

What is the treatment for CMV infection?

In most cases, there is no treatment. Antiviral medications can be used for patients with weakened immune systems.

How is CMV prevented?

Good hand washing is the best preventive measure. Contact with the saliva or urine of young children is a major cause of CMV among pregnant women. There is no reason to exclude infected individuals from work, school or daycare.