

# What to Know About the Risk for CMV

## CMV Is a Common Virus

Cytomegalovirus, or CMV, commonly infects people -- nearly 1 out of every 3 children will be infected by age 5, and over half of all people by age 40. Once infected, CMV stays in your body for your lifetime.

For most healthy adults, after becoming infected CMV mainly stays inactive. But it can reactivate (become active again) in your body if your immune system is weakened from taking certain medicines or treatment, having certain health conditions, or after an organ, bone marrow, or stem cell transplant.

Types of CMV infection include:

- **Primary:** your first infection
- **Reinfection:** you're infected again, but with a different strain (variety) of the virus
- **Reactivation:** an earlier infection in your body becomes active again
- **Congenital:** a baby becomes infected before birth due to their mother's primary infection, reinfection, or reactivation during pregnancy
- **Perinatal:** a baby becomes infected during or shortly after birth, including from breast milk

## CMV and Your Body



Most adults who have a healthy immune system and have a primary CMV infection won't know because they'll have no symptoms, or mild ones like fatigue (tiredness) and a sore throat. But CMV can sometimes cause complications (additional problems) in healthy adults, such as other infections and heart, brain, or digestive system problems.

For adults and children who have a weakened immune system, especially from a transplant, CMV can be serious and even deadly and can cause complications including vision, digestive system, lung, brain, nerve, and skin problems.

For babies who have congenital CMV, serious complications can happen months or years after they're born. Most babies will have no symptoms at birth, but complications and symptoms, when they do happen, can include:

- Premature birth
  - Low birth weight
  - Pneumonia (a lung infection)
  - Spleen and liver problems
  - Hearing or vision loss
  - Skin rashes or purple spots
  - A small head (microcephaly)
  - Growth or learning problems
  - Trouble with muscle tone and coordination
  - Seizures
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## Your Risk of CMV

Anyone at any age is at risk for CMV. But you're more likely to get CMV if your immune system is weakened. For babies, the chances of congenital CMV are greatest when their mother has a primary infection while pregnant.

Because of how CMV spreads, it is especially common among small children and people who have contact with them, such as parents and teachers. When CMV is active in the body, it can easily pass to others through body fluids such as blood, saliva, tears, urine, semen, vaginal fluids, and breast milk by:

- Direct physical contact, including during sex
- Pregnancy, birth, or through breast milk
- Blood transfusions and transplants

Casual contact, such as hugging, very rarely spreads CMV. But you can get infected by touching your eyes, nose, or mouth after touching the body fluids of someone who has CMV. Touching the saliva or urine of young children is one of the main ways that CMV spreads.

## Helping to Prevent the Spread

Ways you can help prevent the spread of CMV include:

- Washing your hands often and well
- Avoiding contact with your child's tears and saliva
- Not sharing food, drinks, or objects you put in your mouth such as straws, cups, utensils, or toothbrushes
- Cleaning frequently touched objects, such as countertops, doorknobs, toys, or phones
- Being careful when handling soiled items like diapers, tissues, and wipes
- Practicing safer sex and using a condom every time



### Questions you can ask your doctor about CMV can include:

What should I know about CMV? What about if I have a weakened immune system or am pregnant, trying to get pregnant, or have a baby?

Am I or someone in my family at risk for CMV?

What should I know about getting tested for CMV or getting my baby tested?

How can I help prevent the spread of CMV?

Where can I find more information and resources?