



Cytomegalovirus (CMV) infection

CMV is a common virus that infects most people in childhood, but rarely causes illness. Usually, 30% to 40% of children aged 1 to 3 years in childcare settings excrete CMV (sometimes can be up to 70%).

School health and childcare provider information

Cause

Cytomegalovirus (CMV), a member of the herpesvirus family.

Symptoms

Most people have no symptoms. Occasionally, a person may develop mononucleosis-like symptoms including fever, sore throat, tiredness, and swollen glands. Some groups, (e.g., those with a weakened immune system due to chemotherapy, organ transplants, or HIV infection) are at special risk for more serious infections. About 5% of children whose mothers were infected during pregnancy may have birth defects such as hearing loss, organ problems (brain, liver, spleen, lung) and delays in growth and development. Babies can be infected in utero.

Spread

Usually through contact with saliva and urine, but also through contact of blood, tears, or breastmilk from an infected person. It is also possible for the virus to transfer across the placenta. Close, prolonged physical contact is necessary for spread to occur. CMV spreads easily in childcare settings, most often among children who drool and/or are in diapers and have no symptoms.

Incubation

Unknown for person-to-person spread.

Contagious period

Virus may be present in urine or saliva for long periods of time, even in people with no symptoms. Once infected, the virus remains will remain in that person's body throughout life and can reactivate. The virus dies rapidly outside the body.

Exclusion

Childcare and School

None. CMV is very common in childcare settings, so exclusion has no benefit.

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Treatment

Treatment is not typically recommended. Antiviral therapy may be considered for infants with a congenital infection that involves hearing loss, vision changes, and developmental delays.

Prevention

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after changing diapers, assisting a child in the bathroom, having contact with a child's saliva or urine, before preparing food, and before eating. **Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.**
- Minimize contact with children's saliva by not kissing their lips or hands and by not having mouth contact with items that could be contaminated by saliva.
- Clean and disinfect items contaminated with saliva or urine (see Section 2).
- Women of childbearing age who work in childcare settings should be aware of CMV, its potential risks, and the above prevention and control recommendations (see CMV and Pregnancy fact sheet.)

For more information, call Hennepin County HSPHD-Epidemiology at (612) 543-5230 or call your local health department.

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