

CYTOMEGALOVIRUS FACT SHEET

Cytomegalovirus (CMV) is a viral infection which can affect body tissues such as mucous membranes, body organs, and body fluids such as blood, human milk, urine and saliva. The majority of cases are mild, and occur without symptoms. Because CMV is in the herpes virus family, it may remain dormant in the body for many years, and may only reactivate when the body undergoes some suppression of the immune system.

Although the virus is not highly contagious, spread of CMV in households and child care is well documented. Excretion rates in child care centers can be high, up to 70% in children aged 1 to 3, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. Most adults will show previous exposure to this virus when specifically tested. The virus can be particularly dangerous to:

- The unborn child of a pregnant woman with her first infection
- A person with a compromised immune system, or someone already seriously ill.

Children who are shedding CMV are not excluded from school or day-care because asymptomatic infection and intermittent shedding is common in persons of all ages.

In caring for all children, **handwashing**, particularly after changing diapers, or coming in contact with saliva or urine is routinely advised for prevention of transmission of any infectious disease.

CAUSATIVE AGENT: Cytomegalovirus, in the herpes virus family (NOT herpes)

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS: Clinical manifestations of this infection vary with the age and immunocompetence of the infected person. Asymptomatic infections are most common, especially in children. A syndrome similar to infectious mononucleosis may occur in adults. Congenital infection of an infant born to a woman with primary infection may manifest as a hearing loss or learning disability About 15% of the time. Rarely more manifestations are seen.

INCUBATION PERIOD: Unknown; but may be 3 to 12 weeks after blood transfusion, and 4 weeks to 4 months after tissue or organ transplantation.

PERIOD OF COMMUNICABILITY: As long as the virus is being shed in urine or saliva.

METHOD OF TRANSMISSION: Congenital (mother to an unborn fetus). Contact with saliva or urine of infected individuals, blood transfusions, organ transplants and sexual contact.

PREVENTION: **Handwashing** after contact with body fluids, including urine and saliva. There is no vaccine. No routine treatment is available except supportive medication for the severely ill or immunocompromised.

For more information contact your health care provider, School Nurse, the Marin County Health Department or: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/cmv.h>