

What to Know About CMV if You're Pregnant, Thinking About Pregnancy, or Have a New Baby

Cytomegalovirus

Cytomegalovirus, or CMV, is a virus that commonly infects children and adults. Nearly 1 out of every 3 kids will have CMV by the time they're 5, and over half of all people will by the time they're 40.

Once you get CMV, it stays in your body for your lifetime. For most healthy adults, CMV mainly stays dormant (inactive), but it can go through periods where it can become active again (reactivates).

CMV infection can be:

- **Primary:** the first time you get CMV
- **Reinfection:** getting infected again, but with a different strain (variety) of the virus
- **Reactivation:** an earlier CMV infection becomes active again
- **Congenital:** a baby gets CMV before birth when their mother has a primary infection (when the chances are greatest), a reinfection, or a reactivation while pregnant
- **Perinatal:** a baby gets CMV during or shortly after birth, including from breast milk



How CMV Can Affect Adults and Children

Most healthy adults who have a primary CMV infection don't know they have it because they have few or no symptoms. But CMV can cause serious symptoms and complications (additional problems) for some people, especially adults and children who have a weakened immune system or babies who are born with congenital CMV.

Most babies will have no symptoms of congenital CMV at birth, but complications can happen months or years later and be lifelong. The risk of complications is greatest if the mother has a primary CMV infection during her first 3 months of pregnancy (her first trimester).

Congenital CMV symptoms, when they do happen, and complications can include:

- Premature birth
- Low birth weight
- Pneumonia
- Yellow skin and eyes (jaundice)
- Liver and spleen problems
- Hearing or vision loss
- Rashes and/or purple spots or skin patches
- A small head (microcephaly)
- Seizures
- Growth or learning problems
- Cerebral palsy or trouble with muscle tone and coordination

How CMV Can Spread

CMV spreads when you have contact with the body fluids of someone who has CMV, such as blood, saliva, tears, urine, semen, vaginal fluids, and breast milk. When CMV is active, it can be easily passed by direct physical contact (including sexual activity), pregnancy, birth, breast milk, blood transfusions, and organ, bone marrow, or stem cell transplants.



Casual physical contact very rarely spreads CMV. But you can get it by touching your eyes, nose, or mouth after touching the body fluids of someone who has CMV. This includes the saliva or urine of children and is why CMV can spread easily in places where there are a lot of kids -- such as schools -- and among kids and people who have a lot of contact with them, including parents and teachers.

To help prevent the spread, be sure to practice good hygiene, including carefully washing your hands. This is especially important for pregnant women and when doing activities where you may touch a child's saliva or urine.

Talking With Your Doctor

Talk to your doctor about CMV. If you're pregnant, your doctor may recommend tests to see if you have or had a CMV infection. If you have a primary CMV infection, your doctor may recommend certain tests before your baby is born to check for congenital CMV.

Babies can be tested for congenital CMV after they're born, but it needs to be before they're 3 weeks old. If your doctor thinks you may have a CMV infection, your baby should be tested as soon as possible.

Questions you can ask your doctor about CMV can include:

What should I know about CMV?

Are there any CMV symptoms that I should look for?

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

Where can I find more information and resources?