



CYTOMEGALOVIRUS

(CMV)
FACT SHEET

WHAT IS CYTOMEGALOVIRUS?

It is a virus that is common in children. Up to 70% of normal children ages 1-3 years in a group care setting have had cytomegalovirus (CMV). Almost all people will eventually be infected, but most people will never know it since they do not experience any illness.

HOW IS IT SPREAD?

It is spread by direct person-to-person contact with blood, saliva, urine, and other secretions from the infected person. It can be spread from mother to infant before, during, and after birth. It can be spread through a blood transfusion from an infected person. It can also be spread by kissing and sexual activity.

HOW DO YOU CONTROL IT?

Using good hand washing techniques at all times is a must, especially for women of childbearing age who work with young children. Avoid exchange of saliva directly by not kissing children on the lips or allowing them to put their hands or fingers in someone's mouth. Avoid contact with saliva on objects and wash well after contact with urine. Do not share cups or eating utensils.

A child does NOT need to be excluded from a group setting unless they meet other exclusion criteria, such as a fever. Exclusion to reduce disease transmission has no benefit because the virus is so common.

COMMENTS:

Cytomegalovirus is the leading infectious cause of birth defects in the United States. Women of childbearing age who have contact with children in a group care setting should discuss CMV with their physician. A physician may order a blood test for CMV antibodies to show whether a woman is already immune or susceptible to CMV.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Generally, young children have no symptoms. Older children and adults may not "feel well" and have a fever. Their liver or spleen may become enlarged.

HOW LONG ARE PEOPLE CONTAGIOUS?

For person-to-person transmission, the contagious period is unknown. However, it is probably several weeks to months. Once a person is infected, the virus is shed intermittently in the urine and saliva for the rest of that person's life.