

Cytomegalovirus (CMV) Risk for the Transplant Patient

CMV is a short name for Cytomegalovirus. Cytomegalovirus is part of the herpes virus family. CMV is a common germ found in the environment. It is usually harmless to people with healthy immune systems. After the transplant, you will be on several drugs to prevent rejection of your new organ. Because these drugs suppress your immune system, you may be at higher risk for CMV infection.

How do I know if I have CMV?

Blood is drawn during your transplant work up to check for CMV in your system. A careful screening also is done to check for this virus in the donor. Even if you have never been exposed to CMV, the person who donated your organ may have been exposed. Knowing if one or both of you have been exposed helps the transplant team take care of you after the transplant.

Over half of the American adults have been exposed to the CMV virus by middle age. Most people do not know that they have been exposed to CMV. CMV will remain dormant in your body for life but can reactivate at any time when your immune system is weak or suppressed.

Infection can occur due to close contact with persons who are infected. Examples of close contact include sharing a drink, kissing, or sexual contact.

Learn more about your health care.

Signs of CMV infection

CMV can infect any organ. Some signs of CMV infection include:

- Fever (temperature over 101 degrees)
- Muscle weakness
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Arthritis type pain in joints
- Blurry or loss of vision in one eye
- Blood in stool, abdominal discomfort, nausea and vomiting
- Headache, confusion, seizure

How is CMV diagnosed?

Sample of blood, urine and sputum may be cultured to see if the CMV virus is active. Other blood tests also may be done. In some cases, a biopsy of the infected organ is done. This means a sample of tissue is removed from the organ for testing.

Prevention and treatment

Because this virus lays dormant in your body, it is possible that you may become infected at any time during your life after transplant. If you would develop CMV long after you were first transplanted, treatment is very similar. Because this virus can infect any organ, you may be very ill and need to be in the hospital.

Not every transplant patient develops CMV. However, an infection can be very serious. You need to contact your transplant team right away when you are not feeling well.

- **Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.**