

Cytomegalovirus (CMV) infection

Cytomegalovirus (CMV) is a common viral infection, particularly in young children. In Australia, about 50% of young adults have been infected. Once a person is infected, they can carry the virus for the rest of their lives, even if they do not have any symptoms. Sometimes the virus can be reactivated, usually when the person has another sickness or is stressed, and may then cause symptoms.

Healthy children and adults do not usually develop symptoms when they are infected, but some may show symptoms that are similar to glandular fever (for example, tiredness, sore throat, swollen glands and fever).

How it spreads

CMV infection spreads through contact with body fluids such as urine, saliva, blood or breastmilk. It can spread from person to person through close contact, such as sharing eating utensils, or through contact with contaminated objects such as toys or nappies. People can be infectious for months to years after their initial infection, because they can keep shedding the virus in their urine or saliva.

Exclusion period

Not excluded – people with CMV can attend the service.

Risks in pregnancy

CMV infection can be dangerous for unborn babies if the mother gets infected during pregnancy. In rare cases, it can cause hearing loss, intellectual disability or even stillbirth. This risk is higher during the first half of the pregnancy. CMV infection occurs in 1% or less of pregnancies and, of these cases, less than 10% of babies are likely to have severe illness.

Educators and other staff at education and care services are at a higher risk of catching CMV because they work with young children. Pregnant educators and other staff who usually work with children under 2 may wish to be reassigned to work with older children until they give birth. Pregnant educators should avoid or take particular care when changing nappies, as CMV can be spread through urine.

To avoid getting infected, wash your hands often, use gloves when changing nappies, and avoid sharing food, drinks or utensils with others.

Actions for educators and other staff

Ensure educators and other staff and children have good hand hygiene, especially after changing nappies or handling items contaminated with urine or saliva.

Ensure staff use appropriate cleaning practices, as described in the *Staying healthy* guidelines.

Inform staff who are pregnant or considering pregnancy about CMV and how to protect themselves against infection.

Actions for parents and carers

If your child has CMV, make sure family members wash their hands properly after handling any items with the child's saliva or urine on them.

More information about CMV infection

See healthdirect for more information on prevention, diagnosis and treatment of CMV (healthdirect.gov.au/cytomegalovirus-cmv). See WorkSafe Queensland for more information on [CMV in early childhood education and care services](#).

To find out if a child needs medical help:

- use the online symptom checker (healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker)
- speak to a registered nurse by calling the 24-hour health advice hotline on 1800 022 222.