Cytomegalovirus (CMV) and Congenital CMV

FACT SHEET FOR SCHOOL NURSES

What is CMV and congenital CMV?

CMV is a common virus. Anyone, at any age, can get CMV. Over half of adults in the U.S. have been infected with the virus by age 40. Most healthy people don't know that they have CMV because it doesn't usually cause any symptoms or harmful effects.

However, CMV is a risk for pregnant people who can unknowingly transmit CMV to their growing fetus. When a baby is born with CMV, it is known as congenital CMV (cCMV). cCMV can be serious and may harm the brain, eyes, or inner ears of some babies infected before birth. Taking steps to reduce the risk of getting CMV is especially important for people who are pregnant or thinking about becoming pregnant.

Tips to reduce your risk of getting CMV

- Wash your hands often, especially after wiping a child's nose or mouth and changing diapers.

- Try to avoid contact with saliva when kissing a young child. For example, kiss on the forehead rather than the lips.

- Avoid putting things in your mouth that have just been in a child's mouth such as cups, eating utensils, toothbrushes, or pacifiers. Also, avoid sharing food or drink with a young child.

- Properly disinfect toys, changing tables, and other surfaces that may have a child's urine or saliva on them.

How is CMV transmitted?

CMV is passed from one person to another through contact with bodily fluids such as urine and saliva. CMV is common in young children. Children can pass the virus to others for many months after infection, even if they don't seem sick.

CMV may be spread through close contact, such as diaper changing, kissing, feeding, and other activities where a person comes into contact with the urine or saliva of someone with CMV.

How are children tested for congenital CMV?

cCMV is most often found in babies less than 21 days old by testing a sample of their urine. In February 2023, Minnesota became the first state in the nation to screen all newborns for cCMV as part of the newborn screening program. As a result of this universal screening, you might learn of more children in your community who have been identified with cCMV.

What are the possible long-term impacts of congenital CMV for children?

cCMV impacts each child differently and there is a wide spectrum of severity. Most children with cCMV will be born healthy and remain asymptomatic. About 1 in 5 children will develop long-term health concerns such as seizures, cerebral palsy, vision loss, developmental delays, or challenges with motor skills or balance. In addition, recent research suggests that children with cCMV may be at increased risk for developing autism.

Hearing loss is common in children with cCMV, even those without other symptoms. The hearing loss can be present at birth or have a delayed onset. It can impact one or both ears and is often unstable with fluctuations and progression. So, it is important that all children with cCMV receive hearing monitoring at regular intervals throughout childhood.

Did you know?

- Congenital CMV is the most common infectious cause of birth defects in the U.S.

- Congenital CMV is the leading cause of non-genetic hearing loss in children.

- About 1 in 200 babies in Minnesota is born with congenital CMV.

- About 1 in 5 babies with congenital CMV will be born with or develop long-term health concerns, such as hearing loss, vision impairment, seizures, or developmental disabilities.
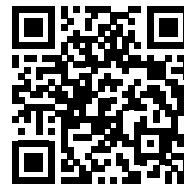
Should people who are pregnant or attempting to become pregnant avoid children with congenital CMV?

Asymptomatic excretion of CMV is common in people of all ages. Children with cCMV should not be treated differently from other children and they should not be expected to stay home from school. It's important for staff of childbearing age to protect themselves from a CMV infection by using standard hygiene precautions with all children.

Where can I find more information about CMV or congenital CMV?

- Talk to a health care provider.

- Call MDH at 651-201-3650, email health.cyshn@state.mn.us, or visit MDH online:

www.health.mn.gov/CMV

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH