

Cytomegalovirus (CMV)

What is CMV?

- CMV is a common virus that belongs to the same family of viruses as cold sores and chicken pox. Once infected, a person stays infected for life. Most of the time, the virus is inactive (“sleeping”) and does not cause problems. About 1 in 2 adults have been infected with CMV. We check this before your transplant.

Why is this important?

- CMV can be passed to you through a transplanted organ if the donor has had CMV in the past.
- If you get an organ from a CMV positive donor and you have never had this infection before (called a CMV mismatched transplant), there is a high chance you will become infected with CMV. To reduce the risk of illness, you will need regular blood tests and possibly medication to prevent CMV infection.
- If you were infected with CMV in the past, the virus can reactivate (“wake up”) after transplant.

What are the symptoms of CMV?

- CMV can become active after a transplant because anti-rejection medicines weaken your immune system. Transplant recipients are more likely to have symptoms when CMV is active, especially if they did not have CMV before their transplant and got the infection from their donor.
- In a person with a transplant, CMV may cause mild to severe flu like illness. It can also affect the intestines, eyes, or transplanted organ. Symptoms may include:
 - Tiredness
 - Diarrhea or abdominal pain
 - Fever
 - Muscle aches
 - Blurry vision or other visual changes
- Contact your transplant team if you develop new or concerning symptoms.

Are there medicines to prevent or treat CMV?

- Many patients at high risk for CMV are given medication after transplant to prevent infection. This is called prophylaxis.
- If you are not taking preventive medication, your blood may be tested regularly (often weekly) to look for CMV.
- It is important to complete your blood tests as instructed. CMV can increase quickly without causing symptoms. Regular testing allows CMV to be detected and treated early to prevent you from becoming sick.
- **No drug gets rid of the CMV virus entirely.** They help control the infection while your body's immune system develops protection against it.

Is there anything that can help my immune system develop a response to CMV?

- Sometimes your transplant team may reduce your anti-rejection medications to help your body control the virus. Any changes to your medications will be carefully managed by your transplant team.

What if I have ongoing CMV?

- Some patients have long term low-level virus in their blood that does not cause symptoms or require treatment. Other patients may need multiple courses of treatment and even referral to specialists to help manage their infection.

Any questions?

- Talk to your transplant team if you have questions about CMV before or after your transplant.