

# Cytomegalovirus (CMV)

## What is cytomegalovirus (CMV)?

- Cytomegalovirus (pronounced sy-toe-MEG-a-low-vy-rus), or CMV, is a common virus found in people of all ages. CMV passes from person to person by direct contact with infected body fluids (e.g., blood, semen, spit, etc.). Once CMV is in a person's body, it can stay there for life.
- A person with a healthy immune system usually only has mild symptoms of the virus, if any. However, CMV can cause serious health problems for people with weakened immune systems and people who have had a kidney transplant. CMV is one of the most common viral infections affecting kidney transplant recipients.

## Who is at risk?

People who have had a kidney transplant and are taking immunosuppressive medications are at risk for CMV. People who have not been exposed to the virus before their transplant are at a greater risk of developing a CMV infection. Having a kidney transplanted from a donor with CMV also increases your risk.

## What are the symptoms of CMV?

In some patients, the virus can become active after taking immunosuppression drugs. People with immunosuppression who have CMV can have serious complications that affect the eyes, lungs, liver, esophagus, stomach, intestines, and brain. They may have flu-like symptoms such as fever, diarrhea, sore throat, fatigue (tiredness), headache, and swollen glands. It is important to tell your health care team if you have any new or worsening symptoms. A CMV infection can develop into CMV disease, which may cause a greater risk of rejection of the transplanted kidney.

## How is CMV diagnosed?

A blood test called a CMV PCR will be done to check if the virus is active.

## What is the treatment for CMV?

- If the CMV PCR blood test is positive, you will need to do blood work often to monitor the virus level. The transplant doctor may lower your immunosuppression drugs as much as possible to help fight the virus, while also protecting your kidney from rejection.
- The transplant doctor may also ask you to take an anti-viral medication to help clear the virus. They will decide the dose (strength) and length of treatment for this medication to best meet your needs.
- If you have any questions about CMV disease, please ask your transplant doctor or clinic nurse.