



# How to Prevent Cytomegalovirus (CMV)

Three Methods: [Staying Clean](#) [Practicing Good Hygiene With Others](#) [Recognizing Symptoms](#)

Cytomegalovirus (CMV) is a common virus that can infect anyone. However, infants and individuals with compromised immune systems are most at risk, since symptoms rarely manifest in healthy adults. Avoiding contact with bodily fluids -- including blood, mucous, semen, and saliva -- can dramatically reduce your chances of contracting CMV. Washing your hands regularly can further decrease your odds of contracting the disease.

Method  
1

## Staying Clean

**1 Wash your hands.**<sup>[1]</sup> Washing your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for 15-20 seconds can help prevent CMV, especially after changing diapers or touching saliva or nasal secretions from a young child.<sup>[2]</sup> To wash your hands properly, use an antibacterial soap and lather for at least 10 seconds. Be sure to scrub the backs of your hands as well as your palms. Get under the fingernails and between the fingers.

- Encourage your children to practice hand washing, too. Instruct them in the proper method.

**2 Don't touch the inside of your nose or mouth.**<sup>[3]</sup> Since CMV is absorbed through the mucous membranes, keeping your hands out of the nose and mouth is a crucial step in preventing infection. Instead of picking a bit of stray food out of your teeth, for instance, use a toothpick or swish some water around in your mouth.

- Use a tissue to blow your nose. Wash your hands afterward.
- Always wash your hands before flossing.

**3 Avoid contact with blood.** Blood transfusions and transplanted organs can lead to CMV infection.<sup>[4]</sup> Avoid getting either unless it is absolutely necessary. While there is sometimes no alternative, consult your doctor to help you find potential alternatives to blood transfusions and organ transplants if you are concerned about CMV.

- Using and sharing dirty needles could also cause a CMV infection. If you are addicted to intravenous drugs (or any other kind of drugs), seek help from a qualified substance abuse counselor.
- If cleaning up a surface that has blood on it, wear disposable gloves.<sup>[5]</sup> Cover the blood drops with paper towel and allow them to soak the blood. Pour a 10% bleach solution around the edges of the blood. Continue pouring the solution toward the center of the blood, then dispose of the paper towel. Wipe up any remaining blood, then spray the area once more with bleach and wipe it away with paper towels. Place all the paper towels and disposable gloves you used in the trash.
- Sterilize items that have come in contact with blood in rubbing alcohol or boiling water.

**4 Be extra careful if your immune system is compromised.**<sup>[6]</sup> Individuals with HIV, AIDS, or a similar autoimmune deficiency should take extra steps to avoid contracting CMV. For instance, avoid cutting yourself, and apply first aid immediately if you do. Eat a healthy diet with lots of whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and a small portion of lean protein. Get at least eight hours of sleep each night and rest during the day if necessary. Maintain excellent hygiene, and keep your clothes, bedding, and towels clean and fresh.

Method  
2

## Practicing Good Hygiene With Others

**1 Avoid touching tears and saliva.**<sup>[7]</sup> This can be difficult with children. It's perfectly natural to comfort a child by holding or hugging them when they are crying, but be careful not to let him or her wipe their tears and saliva all over you. If you do come in contact with these fluids, change your shirt afterward and wash your hands thoroughly.

- Likewise, avoid kissing the child on the mouth. Kiss the child instead on the forehead.

**2 Do not share utensils, cups, or plates.** It's pleasant to dine with your friends and family, but when you do, always use your own cup, utensils, and dishes. Otherwise, you could accidentally expose yourself to CMV-infected saliva.

- If someone offers you a sip of their drink, politely decline. Say, for instance, "Thanks, but I'm not thirsty."
- Use care when throwing out paper, plastic, or other disposable plates, cups, and utensils. Wash your hands after handling these items.

**3 Practice safe sex.**<sup>[8]</sup> People who have been infected with CMV can pass it on to their sexual partners. Use a condom during sex in order to limit the chance of getting a CMV infection. Do not have sex with people whose sexual history you do not know.

- Since bodily fluids contain the CMV virus, avoid oral sex, too.

**4 Use caution if you're breastfeeding.** If you are breastfeeding and have a child, pasteurization or freezing of breast milk can decrease the risk of passing CMV to your child. Be aware, though, that pasteurization and freezing do not entirely eliminate the chance that your child will contract CMV.

- In most cases (90%), children who are born with congenital CMV (CMV contracted from the mother) do not have any symptoms.<sup>[9]</sup>

Method  
3

### Recognizing Symptoms

**1 Look for a fever.**<sup>[10]</sup> Fever is characterized by a feeling of being very hot or very chilled, even in an environment that is at a comfortable temperature. Use a thermometer to diagnose whether someone has a fever.

- The normal body temperature is 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit. Your particular body temperature might be a bit higher or lower than this. Use an abnormal temperature and related symptoms to determine if you have a fever.
- Other symptoms of fever include sweating, shivering, headaches, and dehydration.
- Temperatures between 103 and 106 degrees Fahrenheit might result in confusion, irritability, or hallucinations.

**2 Stay aware of throat pain.** Swollen glands and a sore throat could indicate you've contracted CMV.<sup>[11]</sup> If your throat hurts constantly, feels scratchy or raspy, or your neck feels swollen, monitor your condition.

- Use an over-the-counter throat medicine to relieve swelling and pain in your throat.

**3 Monitor your energy levels.** Individuals with CMV often suffer from extreme fatigue.<sup>[12]</sup> You may feel listless and constantly tired. Get at least eight hours of sleep each night in order to reduce feelings of fatigue.

**4 See a doctor.** Since the symptoms of CMV could be due to many illnesses, it is important to confirm or rule out the existence of CMV with a blood test.<sup>[13]</sup> If symptoms consistent with CMV persist, talk to your doctor about your condition. He or she may recommend that you get a test to look for CMV and prescribe a treatment plan.

- Individuals with compromised immune systems might exhibit additional symptoms, including diarrhea, hepatitis, shortness of breath, and pneumonia.
- Infants with congenital CMV might also exhibit unique symptoms, such as jaundice, seizures, a rash of purple spots across the skin, and a low birth weight.<sup>[14]</sup>
- A laboratory test can detect the virus in a person's body fluids (blood or urine) or by a tissue biopsy.

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## Tips

- CMV can cause symptoms when a baby is born or later in the baby's life.
- Vaccines for preventing CMV infection are in development.

## Warnings

- Contact with the saliva or urine of young children is a major cause of CMV infection among pregnant women.

## Sources and Citations

1. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/cmV/basics/prevention/con-20029514>
2. <http://www.cdc.gov/cmV/overview.html>
3. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/cmV/basics/causes/con-20029514>

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