Cytomegalovirus (CMV)

About CMV
Cytomegalovirus is a type of herpes virus from the same family of viruses that cause chickenpox. Most people with a strong immune system have few or no signs of infection. However, people with weak immune systems are at risk for serious disease.

Who is at risk for CMV infection?
CMV may affect people with weak immune systems. The immune system is the part of the body that fights off infection. People with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), organ transplant and bone marrow transplant recipients, people receiving chemotherapy, or other immunosuppressive treatment can get CMV. Unborn babies may be at risk for CMV. Babies’ breastfeeding from an infected mother who is not being treated for CMV are also at risk.

- CMV is spread by contact with body fluids. Body fluids are blood, urine, saliva, tears and sexual fluids. Contact with the saliva or urine from young children is a major cause of CMV infection among pregnant women.

- CMV may also be called an Opportunistic Infection or OI. OIs are diseases that are not a problem for people with strong immune systems. When your body is not able to fight off infection, your body is at greater risk for an OI.
Signs of CMV Infection

- For people with a strong immune system they may no signs or have mild illness with a fever, sore throat and swollen glands.

- For people with weak immune systems, it is important to treat CMV quickly as it can cause permanent health problems. Seek treatment if you have one or more of these signs:
  - Fever
  - Muscle aches/Fatigue
  - Jaundice
  - Shortness of breath
  - Purple skin splotches
  - Liver problems
  - Hearing changes
  - Vision changes

Testing for CMV

Your doctor will check for signs of CMV and test your urine or blood for signs of infection. Your doctor may also check your eyes or your stool. In some cases, a biopsy of the infected organ is done. This means a sample of tissue is removed from the organ for testing.

Treatment for CMV

Antiviral medicines may be given for CMV infections. These medicines will slow the spread of infection in your body, but do not cure it. Long term medicines may be needed to avoid long term health problems of CMV.

Keep your body strong against OIs by following these tips:

- Take all medicines prescribed by your doctor. Do not stop taking medicines unless you are told to do so. Do not skip a dose of medicine.

- Wash your hands with soap and water often to prevent germs from others from making your body sick. When possible, avoid crowds and people who are ill. Make sure hands are clean when touching your eyes, nose or mouth where germs can enter your body easier.

- Get plenty of sleep. Reduce stress in your life.

- Eat nutritious foods each day and exercise regularly.

- Avoid drugs and alcohol.