Pregnancy, Cytomegalovirus (CMV)

Cytomegalovirus (CMV) is a herpes virus. It is the most common infection at birth that is passed from the mother to baby. It can be passed to someone through bodily fluids including saliva, blood, urine and fluids during sexual contact. Most people infected with CMV do not know they have it. Once infected with CMV, the virus remains in the body forever. It can come and go at any time. If infected with CMV for the first time when pregnant, there is a small chance that the baby will have severe problems. Women who had CMV before they got pregnant do not affect the baby as seriously.

EFFECTS ON INFECTED FETUS BY CMV

- Some infants born with CMV will have a smaller head than normal (*microcephaly*).
- Brain calcifications, growth delay and an enlarged liver and spleen may also be present.
- Some infants are born without symptoms, but will later develop hearing loss, dental defects, eye inflammation and mild neurological problems.
- Other symptoms include:
  - Yellow skin and eyes (*jaundice*).
  - Small blood spots on the skin (*petichiae*).
  - Low platelet blood count that can cause bleeding, an increase of body fluid and even death.

CAUSES

- Infected body fluids, such as:
  - Saliva.
  - Blood.
  - Urine.
  - Tears.
  - Breast milk.
  - Semen and vaginal fluids during sexual contact.
- Blood transfusions.
- Organ transplants.
- With pregnant mothers, blood to the baby through the placenta of an infected pregnant person.
- People with a weakened immune system (HIV, AIDS, chemotherapy).

SYMPTOMS

Most people infected with CMV do not have symptoms. When symptoms do develop, they include:

- Tired and weak (*malaise*).
- Fever and chills.
- Sore throat and swollen lymph glands.
- Night sweats.
- Muscle aches and pain.
- Increase in white cell count and lymphocytes in the blood.
- Abnormal liver tests.

DIAGNOSIS

- Blood tests for antibodies.
- Culture of body fluids.
- Taking a sample (*biopsy*) of body tissue.
- Taking fluid from the pregnancy sac (*amniocentesis*) if a new CMV is detected in the mother to see if the fetus is affected.
- Testing the baby after delivery to see if they have CMV.
- People with weakened immune system may need to be tested for CMV.

TREATMENT

- There is no cure for CMV.
- Antiviral medications may slow the progression of the infection.
- Treatment may not be indicated or needed for healthy children and adults.
- Treatment can be directed toward the symptoms, such as fever, muscle pain, tiredness and weakness.
- Good personal hygiene is the best prevention. Active infection of the mother's lower genital tract is not associated with increased infection of the fetus. Cesarean section is not necessary for a CMV infection.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Follow your caregiver's instructions and advice.
- Wash your hands with warm water and soap often, especially with contact with diapers and children.
- Avoid kissing (especially children).
- **Do not** let your tears touch another person.
- **Do not** breastfeed if you have CMV infection.
- **Do not** eat or drink out of the same utensils of others.
- Practice safe sex use condoms during sexual intercourse.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You think you came in contact with someone who has CMV infection.
- You develop any of the symptoms mentioned above.
- You want to be tested for CMV infection.
- You think your newborn baby has CMV infection.

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