

Preventing CMV infection after a transplant



You've just had a transplant, and that puts you at greater risk for cytomegalovirus (CMV) infection. This fact sheet gives you tips on how to protect yourself.

What is CMV?

CMV is a very common virus that is transmitted through contact with the body fluids (e.g. saliva, blood, etc.) of an infected person.

Usually, the virus causes few or no symptoms.

The most common signs are:

- fatigue
- fever
- loss of appetite
- muscle pain
- chills
- swollen glands

They can last from a few days to a few weeks. Afterwards, the virus stays in the body forever. It cannot be completely eliminated.



What are the risks to me?

You're taking a treatment that weakens your immune system. This makes it harder for your immune system to defend you against disease.

CMV could cause serious problems for you, such as:

- A lung infection (pneumonia).
- Inflammation of the liver (hepatitis).
- Inflammation of the stomach (gastritis).
- Inflammation of the retina (retinitis).
- This could cause your vision to be impaired.
- Inflammation of the large intestine (colitis).

When these complications occur, they must be treated urgently. It's best to avoid them. To do this, the infection must be treated as soon as possible. You'll find more details on this subject on page 2.

Am I at risk for CMV?

It's estimated that at least 1 in 2 people carry the virus. This means you may have caught it before the transplant. If so, it could become active again and make you sick. You could also have received an organ from an infected donor.



How can I know if I have the virus?

You'll have regular blood tests to screen for it. If you have CMV, it's likely to show up in the first 6 months after your transplant.

You should also watch for signs of CMV infection. If you have even one, tell your follow-up nurse right away.

Name:

Tel.:

How is CMV treated?

The aim is to reduce the amount of virus in your body. The main way to do this is with drugs that slow down virus reproduction. These are called antivirals. They can be taken by mouth or injected into the veins. However, the virus cannot be eliminated. It stays in the body.

You must follow the treatment carefully for it to be effective. Here are some tips:

- > Take your medications as prescribed.
- > Respect your blood test schedule.
- > Notify your health care team of any changes in your health status.



How long does the treatment take?

The time varies from one person to another. Your health care team will be able to tell you.

What should I do if I need to cancel or postpone a blood test?

Call the CHUM Transplant Clinic.

> 514 890-8255

Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday to Friday.

Who can I contact for help or to ask questions?

Call your follow-up nurse, Monday to Friday, between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

Outside of these hours, call:

> 514 890-8444

Ask the operator to transfer you to the on-call transplant doctor.



USEFUL RESOURCES

Other health sheets published by the CHUM are available. Ask for those that might fit your situation.



You can also find them on our website chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante

The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal chumontreal.qc.ca

