

You Can Prevent CMV Infection & MAC Disease



Adapted from materials provided by the
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Cytomegalovirus, or CMV, is a virus found all over the world. For people with HIV or AIDS, CMV can cause blurred vision and blindness. It may also cause painful swallowing or diarrhea. In some cases, people with CMV will get pain, weakness, and numbness in the legs. Mycobacterium avium complex, or MAC, is a different group of germs that can infect people with HIV. Adults with HIV usually don't get MAC disease until their T-cell count drops below 50. MAC disease usually occurs later in the course of HIV. It usually is not the first sickness a person with HIV gets. Fortunately, there are ways to avoid both CMV infections and MAC disease.

CYTOMEGALOVIRUS (CMV)

CMV can spread from one person to another in spit, semen, and vaginal secretions. It can also spread through blood, urine, and breast milk. You can get CMV when you touch these fluids with your hands and then touch your nose or mouth. Once CMV enters the body, it stays there. Most people with CMV never get CMV-related



diseases. However, in people with HIV or AIDS, the virus can cause severe disease. CMV mostly affects people with HIV who have CD4 cell counts below 100.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE CMV?

A blood test can tell you if you have CMV, but this test is not commonly performed. CMV doesn't always cause symptoms. Some people have fatigue, swollen glands, fever, and sore throat when they first get CMV. However, these are also symptoms of other illnesses, so most people don't know it when they get CMV.



HOW CAN I PREVENT CMV DISEASE?

The most important thing you can do is to get the best care you can for your HIV infection. Take your antiretroviral medicine just the way your doctor tells you to. If you get sick from your medicine, call your doctor for advice. There are drugs that can help prevent CMV, but they can be expensive. They can also have side effects, and may not work for everyone. Talk with your doctor about it.

HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF FROM CMV?



Wash your hands often and thoroughly.



Use condoms.



Talk to your doctor if you expect to receive a blood transfusion. Most blood banks don't screen blood for CMV.

If you work in a day care center, take special precautions:

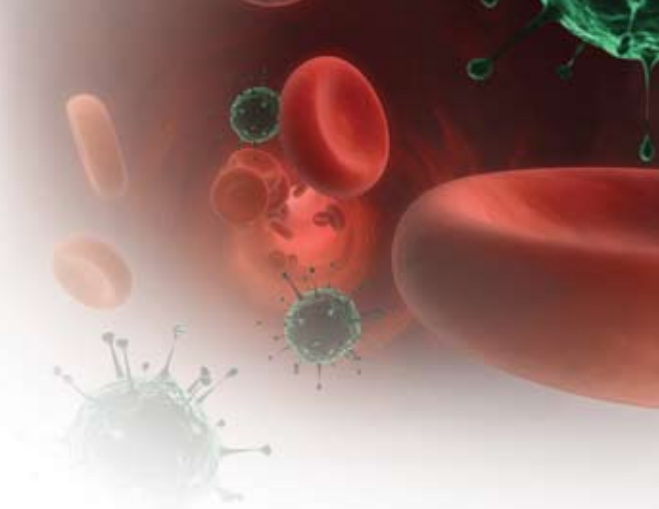
- Wash your hands thoroughly after contact with urine or saliva.
- Avoid oral contact with saliva or objects covered with saliva.
- Talk with your doctor about whether you should continue to work in a day care center.



MYCOBACTERIUM AVIUM COMPLEX (MAC)

Most people with HIV have already been diagnosed with AIDS before they get MAC. About 20% to 30% of people with AIDS get MAC disease. Children can also get MAC disease. Just like with adults, the risk of MAC for children with HIV goes up as their T-cell count goes down. MAC usually infects people through their lungs or intestines. It spreads quickly through the bloodstream, causing widespread disease. When this happens, people can get fevers, night sweats, and abdominal pain. Weight loss, tiredness, and diarrhea are other symptoms.

About 20% to 30% of people with AIDS get MAC disease.





HOW IS MAC DISEASE DIAGNOSED AND HOW DO PEOPLE GET IT?

MAC disease is diagnosed by laboratory tests. These tests catch the MAC germ in samples of blood, bone marrow, or tissue. People with AIDS can get MAC through normal contact with air, food, and water. MAC disease has been found in many types of animals. MAC germs can be found in most sources of drinking water and in dirt and household dust. MAC disease does not seem to be spread from one person to another.

HOW CAN I AVOID MAC DISEASE?

Because MAC germs are found in food, water, and soil, there is no easy way to avoid them. However, there are drugs that can prevent MAC germs from causing disease. These drugs include clarithromycin, azithromycin, and rifabutin. Ask your doctor whether you should take one of these drugs. They can cause side effects, so see your doctor regularly and report any side effects.

There is no easy way to avoid getting MAC.

WHEN SHOULD I GET TREATMENT TO PREVENT MAC DISEASE?

MAC disease occurs in people with very low T-cell counts. Don't get treatment to prevent it until your T-cell count is below 50. Your doctor will tell you when you or your child should begin treatment for preventing MAC disease.

IF I HAVE ALREADY HAD MAC DISEASE, CAN I GET IT AGAIN?

Yes. If you have had MAC disease, continue to take drugs to treat and prevent further MAC disease.



For more information on CMV, go to
www.cdc.gov/hiv/resources/brochures/cmvm.htm

For more information on MAC, go to
www.cdc.gov/hiv/resources/brochures/mac.htm

Free referrals and information:

CDC-INFO

1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)

TTY: 1-888-232-6348

In English, en Español

24 Hours/Day

Free materials:

CDC National Prevention Information Network

(800) 458-5231

1-301-562-1098 (International)

P.O. Box 6003

Rockville, MD 20849-6003

Free HIV/AIDS treatment information:

AIDSinfo: (800) 448-0440

Project Inform: (800) 822-7422

