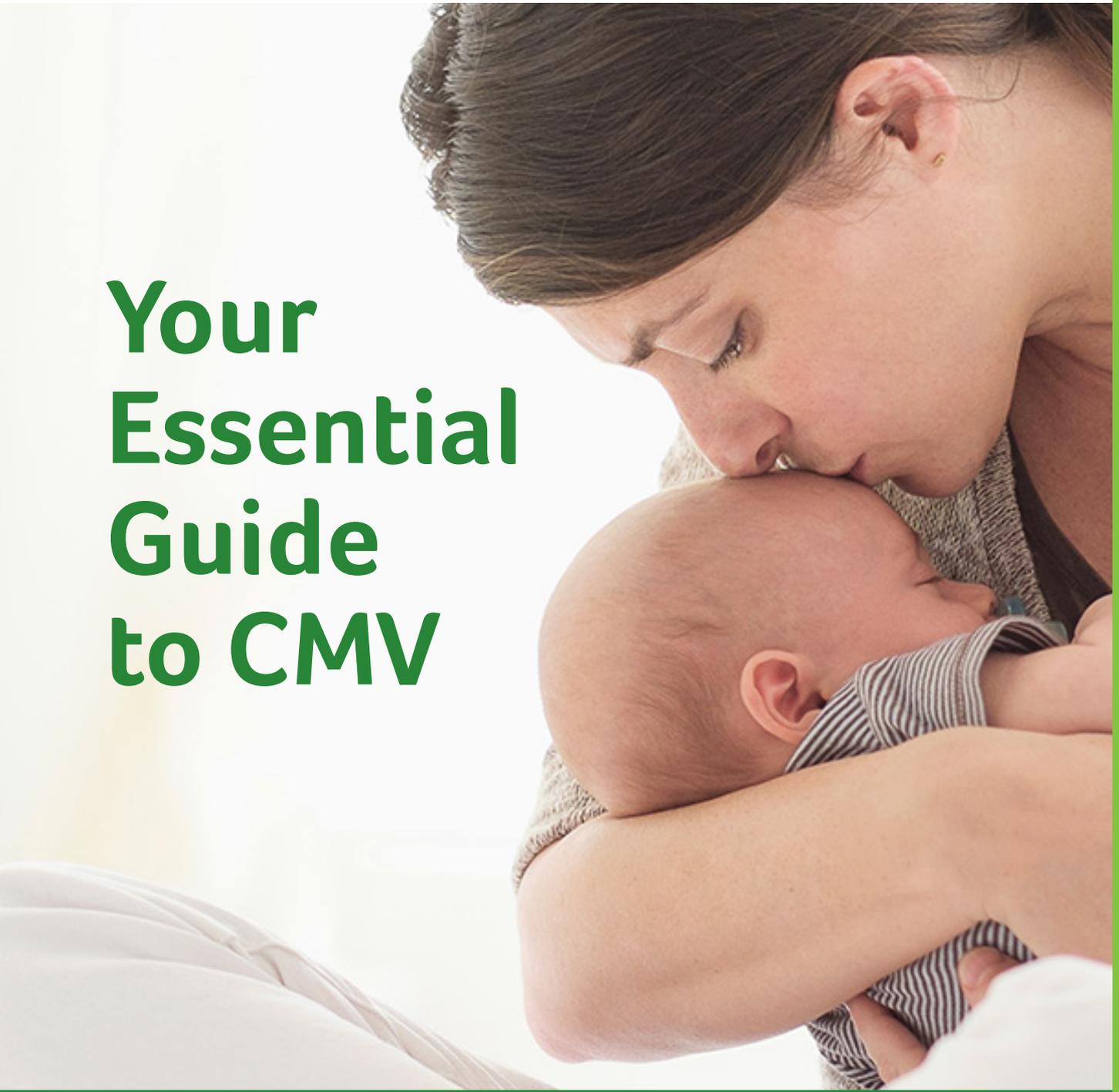




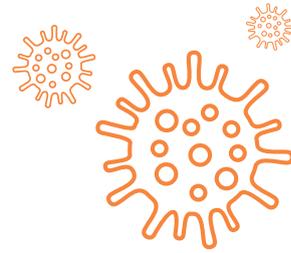
**Cerebral Palsy**  
ALLIANCE

# Your Essential Guide to CMV



With compliments from the Cerebral Palsy Alliance

# CMV Key Facts



- It's a virus called Cytomegalovirus (CMV).
- It's transmitted through close person to person contact.
- It's harmless to most adults, and almost all of us will get it at some point in our lives.
- BUT if it is passed from pregnant women to their babies, it can cause cerebral palsy and other disabilities.
- Every year in Australia, around 400 babies develop lifelong disabilities as a result of CMV infection.

**The Cerebral Palsy Alliance believes that not enough Australians know about CMV or how to reduce the risk of infection.**

**By putting information in the hands of people like you, we believe we can prevent many Australian children from developing disabilities.**

**Thanks for asking for this guide.**

## **CMV is a virus, and it behaves like one too.**

CMV is a herpes virus.

It's passed from person to person through contact with bodily fluids such as urine, saliva, and nasal mucous (*yes, we're talking about snot here*).

So babies, toddlers and young children who generally remain well, can easily share the virus with each other and their caregivers.

In fact children can shed CMV in their urine and saliva for up to two years after infection.

**People who care for or work with young children are at increased risk of infection.**

## **For some people, CMV is dangerous.**

Those most at risk from CMV are people who are immunosuppressed (*perhaps because of serious illness or treatment for cancer*), and pregnant women.

A pregnant woman infected with the virus can pass it on to her unborn baby.



Before he was born, doctors told Christopher's mum and dad that their baby would probably not survive. They could already see that he had severe disabilities – a result of a CMV infection.

Christopher not only survived, but is a happy and much-loved part of his family of five.

Supporters of the Cerebral Palsy Alliance are making sure Christopher gets as much help as possible to encourage his development.

**His family wants others to understand the risks of CMV so that all kids get their best start in life.**

CMV can cause damage to the baby's brain, leading to cerebral palsy, epilepsy, hearing loss, intellectual impairment, and, in rare cases, stillbirth and infant death.

**Every year in Australia, around 2000 babies are born with CMV.** Around 400 of those develop lifelong disabilities.

This makes CMV 20 times more common than well-known causes of complications in pregnancy, such as toxoplasmosis and listeria.

**“CMV can have profound effects on babies, with research suggesting that CMV may play a role for up to 10% of all children with cerebral palsy.”**

**- Professor Nadia Badawi**, Medical Director and Co-Head, Grace Centre for Newborn Intensive Care, The Children's Hospital at Westmead, CP Alliance Chair of Cerebral Palsy Research, The University of Sydney



Awareness and prevention can reduce the number of Aussie babies affected by CMV. But the Cerebral Palsy Alliance is also committed to helping those who live with the impact of the virus.

Our supporters are helping to fund several pieces of essential CMV research. For example, we're running a CMV Register across four states of Australia that is collecting data on children born with CMV so we can understand the long term impact of CMV and the impact of antiviral therapies.

## Can we stop CMV causing cerebral palsy and other disabilities in Aussie children?

**Yes. We can reduce the risk of CMV through awareness, and action.**

Research says that just 1 in 6 pregnant women have heard of CMV, and only 10% of maternal health professionals regularly talk to pregnant women about this common virus.

Reducing disability in newborn babies starts with pregnant women, young families, medical professionals and the wider public knowing the risks of CMV, and how it can be prevented.

**We can all take action to stop reduce the risk of CMV in pregnancy – and reduce its impact on Australian children and families. Here's how:**

### If you are pregnant:



Avoid sharing food, drinks, cutlery, or dummies with young children.



Wash hands thoroughly after close contact with urine or saliva of young children.



Avoid contact with saliva when kissing a child, try a kiss on the forehead instead.

## To reduce the risk of CMV in pregnancy if you work with or care for young children:

- Avoid sharing food, drinks, cutlery, toothbrushes or dummies with them.
- Wash your hands for at least 15 seconds after close contact with the urine or saliva of young children, such as when changing nappies, blowing noses, or handling children's toys and dummies.
- Very carefully dispose of nappies, wipes or tissues used in the care of young children.
- Clean toys that have been used or shared with children.

## If you're a doctor, midwife, or health professional who deals with pregnant women or children:

Check out this excellent evidence-based [e-learning course](#) created in partnership with The University of Sydney, CMV Australia and the Australian College of Midwives, was launched in 2020 in consultation with midwives, obstetricians, infectious disease specialists, researchers and families impacted by CMV.

A close-up photograph of a newborn baby with dark hair, sleeping peacefully in a person's arms. The baby's face is the central focus, with their eyes closed and a calm expression. The background is softly blurred, showing the person holding the baby. The overall tone is gentle and caring.

**“CMV is a preventable cause of disability, and the hygiene strategies are simple – the greatest challenge is getting these important messages out to health professionals and families.”**

**- Dr Hayley Smithers-Sheedy,**  
Cerebral Palsy Alliance Research  
Institute, The University of Sydney.

# Please help spread the word – so we reduce the spread of CMV.

You can learn more about CMV  
via these credible resources by  
clicking the links below:

Websites of [Cerebral Palsy Alliance](#)  
or [CMV Australia](#)

[Australian Government Department  
of Health factsheet](#)

Royal Australian and New Zealand College  
of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists –  
[CMV prevention factsheet](#)

[NSW Government Department  
of Health factsheet](#)

Thanks again for your interest  
in preventing CMV in pregnancy,  
and sparing children and families  
from needless disability.

