

# Congenital CMV and Hearing Loss



Hearing loss is common in babies with congenital CMV, even those without symptoms at birth.



Cytomegalovirus, or CMV, is the most common infectious cause of birth defects in the United States. About 1 out of 200 babies is born with congenital CMV.

One out of 5 babies with congenital CMV will have symptoms or long-term health problems, such as hearing loss. Hearing loss may progress from mild to severe during the first two years of life, which is a critical period for language learning. Over time, hearing loss can affect your child's ability to develop communication, language, and social skills.

## Some babies with signs of congenital CMV at birth may benefit from medicines.

Babies who show signs of congenital CMV disease can be treated with medicines called antivirals. Antivirals may decrease the severity of hearing loss. Babies who get treated with antivirals should be closely watched by their doctor because of possible side effects.

## Hearing loss can be present at birth or develop later.

Babies with congenital CMV may have hearing loss in one ear, and may later develop hearing loss in the other ear. Progression may occur through adolescence.

## Children with hearing loss can benefit from services.

Children diagnosed with hearing loss should receive services such as speech or occupational therapy. These services help ensure they develop important communication, language, and social skills. Children with hearing loss can also learn other ways to communicate, such as using sign language, and to use devices such as hearing aids and cochlear implants. The earlier children with hearing loss start receiving services, the more likely they are to reach their full potential.



## Signs of congenital CMV in newborns

About 10% of babies with congenital CMV infection have signs at birth that include:

- Rash
- Jaundice (yellowing of skin or whites of the eyes)
- Microcephaly (small head)
- Intrauterine growth restriction (low weight)
- Hepatosplenomegaly (enlarged liver and spleen)
- Seizures
- Retinitis (damaged eye retina)

## Signs of hearing loss in babies

- Does not startle at loud noises.
- Does not turn to the source of a sound after 6 months of age.
- Does not say single words, such as “dada” or “mama” by 1 year of age.
- Turns head when they see you, but not if you only call out their name.
- Seems to hear some sounds but not others.

## Signs of hearing loss in children

- Speech is delayed.
- Speech is not clear.
- Does not follow directions. This could be the result of a partial or complete hearing loss.
- Often says, “Huh?”
- Turns the TV volume up too high



U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention

National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD)  
For more information about CMV, visit:  
[www.cdc.gov/cytomegalovirus/about](http://www.cdc.gov/cytomegalovirus/about)  
For more information about hearing loss, visit:  
[www.cdc.gov/hearing-loss-children](http://www.cdc.gov/hearing-loss-children)