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Center for Persons With Disabilities

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CMV ALERT: THE CONGENITAL DISEASE MOTHERS DON'T KNOW ABOUT

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has featured one of the most common congenital (present at birth but not necessarily hereditary) viral infections in the U.S. on their website, one that can cause lifelong disabilities.

Cytomegalovirus Disease, more commonly called CMV, is a virus that very few women are aware of that can be passed on to their unborn child. According to the CDC, about 5,500 (1 in 750) children in this country are born with or develop disabilities that result from congenital CMV infection. More children have disabilities due to this disease than other well-known congenital infections and syndromes, including Down syndrome and spina bifida.

Babies with CMV may develop hearing or vision loss, mental disability, liver problems, or growth problems. CMV can be fatal, but with proper care, most infants with CMV disease survive.

Very few women (only 22% in the U.S.) had ever heard of CMV, according to one survey. It is a disease that is spread from person to person by close contact with body fluids. While a pregnant woman cannot completely eliminate the risk of catching the virus, CDC outlines several things that women can do to help reduce their exposure to it.

To view this list and find out more about CMV, you can go to the CDC website.