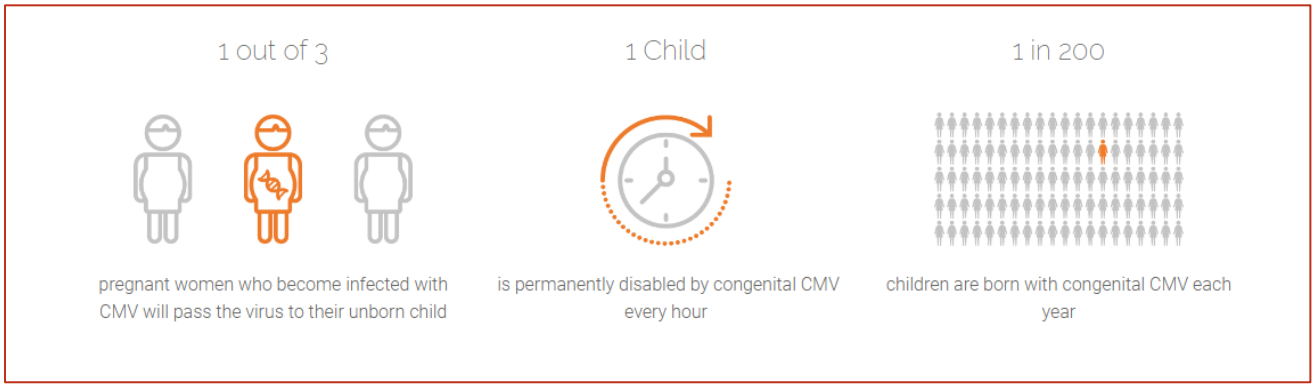
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF OTOLARYNGOLOGY–HEAD AND NECK SURGERY

Preventing Permanent Hearing Loss in Infants

We urge Congress to pass the Stop CMV Act (H.R. 7542 / S. 3864), which would authorize federal funding for congenital cytomegalovirus (cCMV) screening programs that improve early detection and intervention of hearing loss in infants.

Congenital cytomegalovirus (cCMV) is a little known, yet common, virus that is harmless in adults, but can cause birth defects like deafness, seizures and developmental delays in babies. It is the leading infectious cause of birth defects. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that one in 200 babies are born with CMV and 1 in 5 babies born with CMV will develop long-term health problems, such as hearing loss.



Source: National CMV Foundation

A fetus can be infected with cCMV when the mother is exposed to the virus for the first-time or an old infection is reactivated. The virus in the mother travels through the placenta to the fetus. The exact mechanism by which cCMV causes infection and birth defects is still unknown. However, it is believed to damage the cells of the fetus during gestation and/or restrict blood flow to developing organs.

The hallmark feature of cCMV is progressive and permanent hearing loss, which can present at birth or occur later in life. **The Academy's position is that every newborn should be screened for cCMV.** As leaders of the hearing healthcare team, otolaryngologists recognize the critical role that screening plays in facilitating timely intervention and treatment. Both of which can dramatically decrease the risk of continued hearing loss and other degenerative effects.

The bipartisan, bicameral Stop CMV Act authorizes new funding to incentivize hospitals and other healthcare entities that care for children to screen babies for cCMV within the first 21 days after birth. The bill also authorizes funding to collect data on cCMV and to assist in the education and training of health care providers, patients, and the general public. Finally, the legislation directs the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to conduct research into cCMV.

For these reasons, the AAO-HNS strongly supports the Stop CMV Act (HR. 7542 / S. 3864). The Stop CMV Act is also endorsed by the National CMV Foundation, Epilepsy Foundation, National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management, and the American Cochlear Implant Alliance.