

# Pregnancy virus warning

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A virus that causes hearing loss and intellectual disabilities in infants is being underdiagnosed, according to UNSW researchers, who are calling for routine screening for all pregnant women and newborns.

Cytomegalovirus (CMV) is a common viral infection that causes flu-like or no symptoms in healthy people. However, it can cause problems for pregnant women, particularly if the infection occurs for the first time during pregnancy.

It can result in hearing loss and [intellectual disability](#) in newborn babies and in severe cases can be fatal.

“CMV is greatly under-diagnosed,” said Professor William Rawlinson from UNSW and the South East Area Laboratory Services in a research

paper published in the latest *Australian Medical Journal*.

A 10-year surveillance project between 1999 and 2009 using data collected through the Australian Paediatric Surveillance Unit showed that, while Australia was estimated to have about 1,800 cases of CMV a year, only five to 25 were being diagnosed.

Professor Rawlinson said CMV screening would be cost-effective and an antiviral therapy was available for treatment in infants before 30 days of age

“Most infected babies will be well. However, about half of the infants who develop disease will not show symptoms at birth and are unlikely to be identified without screening,” Professor Rawlinson said.

**More information:** Read the full story in [The Age](#)

Provided by University of New South Wales

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