

FACT SHEET HANTAVIRUS PULMONARY SYNDROME

What is Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS)?

It is a respiratory disease caused by a member of the hantavirus family called Sin Nombre virus. This virus is carried in wild rodents such as deer mice (*Peromyscus maniculatus*). Mice do not appear ill while carrying it.

How does a person get HPS?

People become infected after breathing in airborne particles of urine, droppings or saliva from infected rodents. Most cases in the U.S. have been associated with occupying rodent-infested vacant cabins or other dwellings, cleaning barns or other outbuildings, disturbing rodent-infested areas while hiking or camping, planting or harvesting fields, and living in or visiting areas where there has been an increase in rodents. Handling infected rodents, their nests or droppings, and then touching the nose, mouth, or eyes may spread the virus. There is no evidence of person-to-person spread.

Who can be affected by HPS?

Anyone can get HPS.

Can animals transfer HPS?

Cats and dogs are not known to spread the hantavirus from rodents to people. Predators such as snakes, hawks, owls and coyotes help control rodents and do not spread the disease.

What are the symptoms of HPS infection?

The first symptoms, appearing a few days to six weeks (usually 2 weeks) after contact with the virus, are flu-like and may include fever, muscle and body aches, chills, cough, headaches, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, or feeling tired. The lungs then begin filling with fluid, making breathing difficult. If you have been exposed to rodents and experience these symptoms, notify your healthcare provider immediately.

How should I get rid of dead rodents, droppings or nests?

Removing the rodents from your home will decrease your risk for HPS. Follow these standard rodent-removal and clean-up guidelines:

- Set spring traps that will kill mice.
- Wear rubber gloves. Spray the nest and/or dead rodent with a household disinfectant solution of 3 tablespoons of bleach in 1 gallon of water until thoroughly soaked. Other disinfectants can also be used as directed. Let the area soak thoroughly for 10-15 minutes.
- Remove the nest and/or rodent using a long-handled shovel or rubber gloves.
- Double-bag the rodent and/or nest securely with plastic bags and dispose of them in the trash. People in rural areas may bury the waste 2-3 feet deep.
- While still wearing gloves, wipe up the area with paper towels or rags. Double-bag all paper towels, rags, and gloves used in the cleanup. Dispose of them in a tightly covered trash container.
- Clean gloves before taking them off with disinfectant or soap and water.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after completing the cleanup.

How should I clean my home after rodents are removed?

Floors, countertops, cabinets and other surfaces should be cleaned. Use a solution of bleach or other household disinfectant. A solution of 1½ cups of household bleach in 1 gallon of water (or a 1:10 solution) can be used in place of a commercial disinfectant. Avoid spilling the mixture on clothing or other items that might be damaged by bleach. Wear rubber, latex, vinyl, or nitrile gloves when preparing and using chlorine solutions. They should be prepared fresh daily. Do not sweep floors with a broom, or vacuum, until the area has been disinfected. Rugs can be steam cleaned. Hard floors should be sprayed with a disinfectant solution.

How can I prevent rodents from entering my home?

- Seal, cover or screen all holes in walls or floors larger than one-quarter inch.
- Keep food (including pet food) and water covered and stored in rodent-proof metal or thick or thick plastic containers with tight-fitting lids. Clean up spilled food. Keep dishes clean.
- Store garbage in rodent-proof metal or thick containers with tight-fitting lids. Keep containers at least 12 inches off the ground.
- Place three inches of gravel under the base of mobile homes to discourage rodent burrowing.
- Place wood piles 100 feet or more away from the house and elevate wood at least one foot off the ground.
- Remove any food sources near buildings that might attract rodents.