



Hantavirus



Risk Management & Safety

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People can become infected with hantavirus after disturbing or cleaning rodent droppings or nests, or by living or working in rodent-infested settings. An infection with hantavirus can progress to Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS) which can be fatal.

What are the symptoms of Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS)?

Symptoms begin one to six weeks after inhaling the virus and typically start with 3-5 days of "flu-like" illness including fever, sore muscles, headaches, nausea, vomiting and fatigue. As the disease gets worse, it causes shortness of breath due to fluid filled lungs. Hospital care is usually required. It is a serious disease and about one out of three people diagnosed with HPS have died.



What are potential exposures?

1. Opening and cleaning previously unused buildings like cabins, barns or other storage facilities that have been closed during the winter.
2. Housecleaning activities especially if rodents share the house.
3. Work related exposures such as construction, utility, and pest control workers when working in crawl spaces, under houses or in vacant buildings that may have a rodent population.
4. Outdoors if using infested trail shelters or camping in other rodent habitats.

Hantaviruses in the USA are mainly transmitted to people when they breathe in air contaminated with the virus. There is no evidence that the disease is transmitted from human to human. In areas where carrier rodents live such as the deer mouse, cotton rat or white-footed mouse take sensible precautions even if you do not see rodents or their droppings.

Cleaning Procedures

1. Major infestations must be cleaned by certified professionals. If in doubt, call EHS for an assessment.
2. Wear rubber, latex, vinyl or nitrile gloves.
3. Do not stir up dust by vacuuming, sweeping, or any other means!
4. Before cleaning, open all doors and windows for 30 minutes to allow fresh air to enter work area.
5. Thoroughly wet contaminated areas with a 10% hypochlorite (bleach) solution: Mix 1 1/2 cups of bleach in one gallon of water. Once everything is soaked for 10 minutes, remove the nest or droppings with a damp towel and then mop or sponge the area with bleach solution.
6. Steam clean or shampoo upholstered furniture and carpets with evidence of rodent exposure
7. Spray dead rodents with disinfectant and then double-bag along with all cleaning materials. Bury, burn, or throw out rodent in appropriate waste disposal system.
8. Disinfect gloves with disinfectant or soap and water before taking them off. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water (or use a waterless alcohol-based hand rub when soap is not available).

For more information contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/hantavirus>

Contact RMSO to set up a training session!

We gear our trainings to the specifics of your worksite and job task. Call 766-3277 or email

Safety: It's Our Job...
It's YOUR Job