



Hantavirus, Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS) and Hantavirus Infection, Non-Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome

Fact Sheet

What is Hantavirus?

Hantaviruses are a group of viruses that are carried by certain rodents. In the United States this includes: cotton rat, deer mouse, rice rat, and white-footed mouse. Hantavirus infection can cause different syndromes including: Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS) and Hantavirus non-pulmonary syndrome.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Early symptoms include fever, chills, and muscle aches. You may also have nausea, headaches, vomiting, diarrhea, dizziness, or cough. In severe cases, shortness of breath and cough could lead to buildup of fluid in the lungs and severe lack of oxygen in the blood.

How is it spread?

It is spread by infected rodents' saliva, urine, or droppings. Humans get sick from breathing in bits of saliva, urine, droppings, or nesting materials that are in the air, or when they enter the nose, mouth, or broken skin. It may be spread to someone who is bit by an infected rodent, but this is rare. Hantavirus is not spread from person to person.

How common is it?

Hantaviruses are found around the world. In the United States, HPS was first identified in 1993. Since then, over 700 cases have been reported, mostly in the western half of the United States. There has only been one reported case of HPS in a Maine resident.

How is it treated?

There is no treatment for Hantavirus, just supportive therapy, so prevention is best.

How can I prevent it?

The best way to prevent Hantavirus is to keep rodents from building nests in homes and workplaces. You can do this by:

- Not leaving food out
- Sealing off rodent entry holes or gaps

If rodents are in your home or outbuildings:

- Use snap traps to catch rats and mice

To clean up evidence of rodents:

- For areas where rodents might be or may have been: open doors and windows to let fresh air in for at least 30 minutes before cleaning the area
- Wear gloves and dust mask and spray rodent droppings with bleach and water before cleaning
- Never use a vacuum cleaner or broom to clean rodent droppings or nesting materials

What should I do if I think I have it?

If you have had contact with rodents and have fever, deep muscle aches, or shortness of breath, see your healthcare provider right away. Tell him or her about your contact with rodents.

Where can I get more information?

For more information, contact your healthcare provider or local health center. You can also contact the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention at 1-800-821-5821 or www.mainepublichealth.gov/. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website - <http://www.cdc.gov> – is another excellent source of health information.