

Hantavirus

Definition:

Infection with hantavirus can lead to Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS) a severe, sometimes fatal, respiratory illness.

Signs and symptoms:

Early symptoms of HPS may include fatigue, fever, muscle aches, headache, dizziness, chills, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain. Late symptoms typically appear 4-10 days later and include coughing and shortness of breath. In severe cases, infection can lead to severe lack of oxygen in the blood, low blood pressure, and the lungs may fill with fluid.

Transmission:

Hantavirus is transmitted by inhalation of particles contaminated with feces, urine, or saliva of infected rodents; through the bite of an infected rodent; or touching the eyes, nose or mouth after handling rodent dropping, urine, or nesting materials. Hantavirus is not spread from person-to-person, but multiple cases may occur from the same exposure.

Diagnosis:

Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome is diagnosed based on symptoms, exposure history, and blood test results.

Role of the School Nurse:

Prevention

Educate students and staff on the importance of avoiding contact with rodents or their droppings, urine, saliva, and nesting material. Other prevention messages include:

- Do not leave food in open areas that rodents might find
- Before entering areas where rodents might be living, open doors and windows to let in fresh air
- 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

Treatment Recommendations

If infection is suspected or a rodent bite is reported, the student should be referred to his or her primary care provider or emergency department for further evaluation. Treatment for HPS is supportive only and usually requires prompt admission to intensive care.

Exclusions:

No exclusions are indicated for students with HPS. Standard precautions should be used with all students and staff.

Reporting Requirements:

Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome is a reportable condition and should be reported to Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821.

Resources:

- Maine CDC Hantavirus website (including fact sheet)
<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/zoonotic/hantavirus.shtml>
- Federal CDC Hantavirus website
<http://www.cdc.gov/hantavirus>
- Federal CDC Rodent website
<http://www.cdc.gov/rodents/index.html>