

Hantavirus and Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome

What is Hantavirus?

Hantavirus is a genus in the virus family *Bunyaviridae*. Some of these viruses can cause severe illness such as Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome in humans. This syndrome is recognized by severe respiratory failure (noncardiogenic pulmonary edema). Infected individuals have a 40 to 50 percent chance of surviving.

How do you contract Hantavirus?

Hantavirus is carried by rodents (most commonly the deer mouse and cotton rat) and is shed in their urine, feces, and saliva. Inhaling aerosolized virus particles can infect humans - this can happen when cleaning out a garage or disturbing wild areas contaminated with rodent excrements. There are no known cases of human-to-human transmission in the United States.

What are the symptoms of Hantavirus infection?

The most common symptoms are fever, respiratory distress, hypotension, and gastrointestinal pain.

How is Hantavirus diagnosed?

Diagnosis can be made from blood tests.

How is Hantavirus treated?

Treatment includes respiratory care and fluid replacement. Recovery is most often rapid from a Hantavirus infection, but may take weeks or months.

How can I protect myself from Hantavirus?

The best way to prevent a Hantavirus infection is keeping rodent populations low in and around your home. This can be done by moving trash or woodpiles away from the house. Don't feed unwanted guests-keep pet food away from rodents. When camping, do not sleep on bare ground and prevent rodents from having access to food and sleeping bags. Finally, when cleaning areas known to have rodent excrements, wet down the area with a solution of ½ cup bleach to a gallon of water. It is very important not to vacuum or sweep the area; this will aerosolize the virus.

I have noticed some dead rodents around my neighborhood. Should they be tested for Hantavirus?

No, Hantavirus does not kill rodents. When moving dead rodents and nesting material, spray with a bleach/water solution first and take care not to stir up the area.

Has Hantavirus infection been identified in Minnesota?

Yes. Minnesota has had two cases since 1993.

This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician or veterinarian for specific information related to you or your animals.

If you have comments or questions about this fact sheet, email: cahfs@umn.edu Updated: 7/1/05

For more information go to:

- **Centers for Disease Control (CDC)**
www.cdc.gov