

HANTAVIRUS FACT SHEET

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Hantavirus is a rare but potentially deadly disease caused by a family of viruses carried mainly by rodents such as mice and rats. People usually become infected after breathing in particles contaminated with rodent urine, saliva, or droppings. Most hantaviruses do not spread from person to person, though the Andes strain has caused limited human-to-human transmission in South America.

How It Spreads

- Breathing in contaminated dust from rodent droppings or urine
- Touching contaminated surfaces and then touching your face
- Rodent bites or scratches (rare)
- Limited person-to-person spread has only been confirmed with Andes virus

Common Symptoms

Early symptoms often resemble the flu:

- Fever and chills
- Muscle aches and fatigue
- Headaches
- Nausea or vomiting
- Abdominal pain

Severe cases can rapidly progress to breathing difficulty, lung failure, or kidney complications.

Why It Matters

Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS) can become severe very quickly. According to the CDC, nearly 4 in 10 people who develop severe respiratory symptoms die from the illness. Early medical care improves survival chances.

Prevention Tips

- Seal holes and cracks where rodents can enter buildings
- Store food in sealed containers

- Use traps to control rodent infestations
- Never sweep or vacuum rodent droppings directly
- Wear gloves and a mask when cleaning contaminated areas
- Spray droppings with disinfectant before cleanup

Safe Cleanup Steps

1. Open windows and ventilate the area for at least 30 minutes.
2. Wear rubber or disposable gloves and a mask.
3. Spray rodent droppings or nests with disinfectant or diluted bleach.
4. Let the disinfectant soak for several minutes.
5. Wipe up debris with paper towels instead of sweeping.
6. Dispose of waste in sealed trash bags and wash hands thoroughly.

When To Seek Medical Care

Seek immediate medical attention if you develop flu-like symptoms after possible rodent exposure, especially if breathing problems begin.

Sources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- World Health Organization (WHO)
- Mayo Clinic

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