



CALHOUN COUNTY  
**Public Health Department**

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269-969-6370

Fact Sheet

## **Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome**

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### **What is hantavirus?**

Hantavirus is the name of a group of related viruses found in rodents throughout the world. Some hantaviruses can cause a rare but deadly disease called hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS).

Hantaviruses are found mostly in Europe and Asia. The most important hantavirus in the United States that can cause HPS is the Sin Nombre virus, spread by the deer mouse.

### **Who can get hantavirus pulmonary syndrome?**

Anyone who is around mice, rats, or rodent-infested areas is at the highest risk of becoming infected with hantavirus. Rodent infestation in and around the home remains the primary risk for hantavirus exposure. You do not have to already be sick to be at risk for HPS.

### **How is hantavirus spread?**

Rodents shed hantavirus in their urine, feces, and saliva. When fresh or dried urine, feces, or nesting materials are stirred up, droplets containing the virus become airborne. Most humans are infected when they breathe in contaminated air.

There are a couple of other ways hantavirus can be transmitted, though these occurrences are very rare: when a rodent bites a human, when a person touches a surface contaminated with infected rodent droppings and then touches their nose or mouth, or when a person eats or drinks something contaminated with infected rodent droppings.

There is no evidence in the United States that hantavirus can be spread by other humans, other animals, or from biting insects.

## **What are the symptoms of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome?**

Based on the current information, symptoms begin developing between 1 to 8 weeks after exposure to fresh urine, droppings, or saliva of infected rodents.

Early symptoms include:

- Fatigue
- Fever
- Muscle Aches
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Chills
- Abdominal Issues (nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain)

Late symptoms include:

- Coughing
- Shortness of breath

## **What is the treatment for hantavirus pulmonary syndrome?**

There is no specific treatment for HPS. Most patients receive intensive care with oxygen therapy to help them through the period of severe respiratory distress. The sooner treatment is begun, the better chance an infected person has of recovering.

## **Are there complications from hantavirus pulmonary syndrome?**

In cases where the patient does not receive intensive respiratory therapy or begins the therapy too late, death can occur. HPS has a mortality rate of 38%. However, once a person has recovered, no chronic infection has been detected.

## **How can hantavirus pulmonary syndrome be prevented?**

To prevent exposure to hantavirus, avoid contact with rodents and their droppings.

- Control mice near your home by reducing potential habitats and food sources.
- Keep your house clean to make your home less inviting to rodents.
- Prevent mice from entering your home by sealing any openings.
- Once your home has been sealed, trap and dispose of rodents in your home.

- Clean and disinfect your home when all rodents have been cleared out.
  - Ventilate areas to be cleaned by opening windows and doors and cross ventilating for at least 30 minutes. Leave the area while this is occurring.
  - Persons involved in clean up should wear rubber or plastic gloves.
  - Spray dead rodents, nests, and droppings with a commercial household disinfectant before disposing in a double plastic bag.
  - After removing contaminated materials, mop all affected areas with a water, disinfectant, and detergent solution. Do not vacuum or sweep dry surfaces, as this will create dust that could be inhaled.
- Campers should avoid contact with rodents and their nests as much as possible. Avoid sleeping on the bare ground. Keep food in rodent-proof containers and do not drink untreated surface water.

## **How do I get more information on hantavirus?**

Calhoun County Public Health Department

Phone: 269-969-6383

 [www.facebook.com/CCPublicHealthDepartment/](https://www.facebook.com/CCPublicHealthDepartment/)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Phone: 800-232-4636 (800-CDC-INFO)

Website: [www.cdc.gov/hantavirus/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/hantavirus/index.html)

Spanish: [https://www.cdc.gov/hantavirus/pdf/hps\\_brochure\\_sp.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/hantavirus/pdf/hps_brochure_sp.pdf)

*Hantavirus*

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