

HANTAVIRUS

Who Is at Risk of Getting HPS, and Why?

HPS Was Discovered in the Southwest, but It's NOT an "Indian Disease."

You can be old or young, male or female, of any race, living anywhere in almost any part of the Americas. Healthy, active people are more likely to become infected because their activities often put them in contact with the virus. By the way, in the United States, you cannot get HPS from another person.

What Kind of Activities Are Risky?

Anything that puts you in contact with rodent droppings, urine or nesting materials can place you at risk for infection. These include such activities as opening up cabins and sheds or cleaning outbuildings that have been closed during the winter—such as barns, garages or storage facilities for farm and construction equipment. Both activities mean you may directly touch rodents or their droppings and/or "stir up the dust," and when you touch or inhale them, you're at risk for infection.

Cleaning in and around your own home can put you at risk if rodents have made it their home, too. And many homes can expect to shelter a few rodents, especially when the weather turns cold.

Overall, the chance of being exposed to hantavirus is greatest when people work, play or live in closed spaces where rodents are actively living. However, recent research results show that many people who have become ill with HPS got the disease after having been in frequent contact with rodents and/or their droppings for some time. In addition, many people who have become ill reported that they had not seen rodents or their droppings—at all. Therefore, if you live in an area where the carrier rodents such as the deer mouse are known to live, take sensible precautions before you do activities like those described above—even if you don't see any rodents or their droppings.

Conditions That Put You at Risk:

- closed up rooms, cabins, warehouses
- housecleaning activities
- really stirring up dust
- large populations of rodents—so don't invite them to live around you by leaving food out or allowing them easy access to your home

Tips For Preventing HPS and Clean Up Infested Areas, Using Safety

Precautions:

- Put on latex rubber gloves before cleaning up.
- Don't stir up dust by sweeping up or vacuuming up droppings, urine or nesting materials.
- Instead, thoroughly wet contaminated areas with detergent or liquid to deactivate the virus. Most general purpose disinfectants and household detergents are effective. However, a hypochlorite solution prepared by mixing 1 and 1/2 cups of household bleach in 1 gallon of water may be used in place of commercial

disinfectant. When using the chlorine solution, avoid spilling the mixture on clothing or other items that may be damaged.



- Once everything is wet, take up contaminated materials with a damp towel, then mop or sponge the area with disinfectant.
- Spray dead rodents with disinfectant, then double-bag along with all cleaning materials and bury or burn—or throw out in appropriate waste disposal system. If burning or burying isn't feasible, contact your local or state health department about other disposal methods.
- Finally, disinfect gloves *before taking them off* with disinfectant or soap and water. After taking off the clean gloves, thoroughly wash hands with soap and warm water.
- When going into cabins or outbuildings (or work areas) that have been closed for awhile, open them up and air out before cleaning.

How do I clean where mice have fed or nested?

- Follow these steps when cleaning areas where hantavirus is suspected.
- Wear latex or rubber gloves.
- Mix a solution of 1 cup bleach to 10 cups water or use a household disinfectant.
- Do not vacuum, sweep or dust. This may spread the virus through the air. Use rags, sponges and mops that have been soaked in the disinfectant solution.
- Thoroughly spray or soak any dead mice, droppings, or nesting areas with disinfectant or bleach solution.
- Wipe down counter tops, cabinets and drawers. Mop floors and baseboards.
- Steam clean carpets, rugs, and upholstered furniture.
- Wash clothes and bedding in hot water and detergent. Set the dryer on high.
- To dispose of contaminated items, including dead mice, put them in a plastic bag. Seal the bag and put it in another plastic bag. Seal the outer bag and put it in your outdoor garbage can.
- Disinfect or throw away the gloves you used.
- When you are done, wash your hands or shower with soap and hot water.

- If you are cleaning out a building that has been closed up, such as a cabin, shed, or garage:
- Air out the building for at least 30 minutes by opening windows and doors.
- Leave the building while it is airing out.
- Wear gloves and a dust mask while cleaning.
- Follow the ten cleaning steps.
- Spray dirt floors with the bleach or disinfectant solution.