



HANTAVIRUS

What is hantavirus?

Hantavirus is a zoonotic disease (disease spread from animals to people) caused by a virus. Infections are found where people are in close contact with infected rodents. Depending on the type of hantavirus, two syndromes can occur – hantavirus pulmonary syndrome and hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome. Both are found in Europe and Asia. Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome is rare in Canada.

What are the symptoms of hantavirus?

Symptoms of hantavirus causing hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome include fever, varying degrees of hemorrhagic manifestations and kidney involvement. Symptoms of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome generally appear two weeks after infection and begin as a flu-like illness that progresses rapidly to severe lung infection requiring hospitalization.

How is hantavirus spread?

Hantavirus is found only in rodents, including deer mice in Canada. Rodents shed the virus in their urine and feces. People become infected by breathing in air contaminated with the virus.

How is hantavirus diagnosed?

Hantavirus is diagnosed by symptoms, history of exposure and laboratory testing.

Who is at risk of hantavirus infections?

Persons living or travelling in areas of the world where hantavirus is present have a low risk of being infected. Occupational exposures to rodents and their droppings may increase the risk (veterinarians, wildlife biologists, pest exterminators).

How can hantavirus be prevented?

Follow basic precautions when handling animals. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the toilet, after handling animals, after handling raw meats and before preparing or eating food.

Control rodents and fleas in areas where hantavirus is present to prevent spread to people. Prevent rodents from infesting the places where you live and work. Seal entry holes and use rodent traps.

Clean rodent-infested buildings. Open doors and windows to air out buildings. Wet contaminated areas with detergent and remove with a damp towel, and then mop area with disinfectant. Spray dead rodents with disinfectant before removal, wear gloves and double-bag with all cleaning materials. Dispose of material by burial, burning or throwing out in appropriate waste disposal system.

How is hantavirus treated?

Most people with hantavirus will go to the hospital for supportive care. Anti-viral drugs may be used.

What is the Public Health response?

Health care providers and laboratories must notify cases of hantavirus to Public Health. Public Health staff may interview the health care provider and patient (or caregivers) to find out how the infection occurred, identify other people at risk of infection, implement control measures and provide other advice.

Further Information

For additional information, contact your health-care provider, local [Public Health office](#), or Telecare 811.

Useful websites:

Public Health Agency of Canada
www.phac-aspc.gc.ca