

# Hantavirus

## What is Hantavirus?

Hantavirus is a disease that affects the lungs. The virus is spread to people by infected rodents, especially the deer mouse. Infection can lead to a serious complication called Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS) that is fatal about 40% of the time.

## How do I get Hantavirus?

- Infected rodents shed the virus in the poop, urine, and saliva.
- People become infected by breathing in air that contains the virus from the rodent's poop, urine, and saliva.
- Cleaning, construction, yard work, and other activities that disturb groups or nests of rodents can make the virus airborne.
- People can also become exposed if they are bitten by an infected rodent.
- While less common, touching your eyes or mouth after close contact with an infected rodent can spread the virus.
- Hantavirus is not spread from human to



## What are the symptoms of Hantavirus?

Symptoms usually begin 2 to 3 weeks after being infected with the virus. However, it can be as short as 1 week or as long as 6 weeks.

Early symptoms are often similar to the flu:

- Fever
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Muscles aches – especially in thighs, hips, and lower back

Symptoms can progress to:

- Dry cough
- Shortness of breath and trouble breathing
- Fluid build-up in lungs – can lead to respiratory failure

## What is the treatment for Hantavirus?

Currently there is no treatment for Hantavirus or HPS. If you experience these symptoms and have been in a rodent infested area, go to the doctor immediately. Early diagnosis is critical in order to treat the symptoms.

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## How do I prevent Hantavirus?

The best way to prevent Hantavirus is to keep rodents away from your home and yard.

- Cover or fill any holes where rodents could enter your home.
- Keep the outside area around your home clear of any wood, leaf, mulch or garbage piles.
- Be sure rodents cannot find a food source near your home. Keep trash in heavy duty plastic or metal garbage cans.
- Don't store pet food outside or in open containers. It will attract rodents and other pests to the area.
- Use traps with peanut butter or call pest control to decrease rodent populations in or near your home.



### Questions?

Contact Tri-County Health Department at 720-200-9200 or visit us at: [www.tchd.org](http://www.tchd.org)

## Cleaning and Sanitation

Rodent Infested Areas:

- Before cleaning a rodent infested area, open all window and doors for at least 30 minutes before entering.
- Wear gloves and soak the area with a disinfectant or bleach solution for 5-10 minutes.
- After soaking, mop or wet vacuum the area.

Rodent droppings:

- To clean rodent urine or droppings, heavily spray the area with a disinfectant or bleach solution. Let soak for 5 minutes.
- Use gloves and a paper towel to wipe up the urine or droppings.
- Mop or sponge the area with a disinfectant or bleach solution.

Bleach Solutions:

- Make sure the bleach solution is strong enough to kill the virus.
- The CDC recommended solution uses 1½ cups of household bleach mixed with 1 gallon of water.

**Do NOT sweep or vacuum rodent droppings, urine, or nests. This will move the virus particles into the air, where they can be inhaled.**

## Be on the lookout!

In Colorado, the deer mouse is the most common species that carries Hantavirus. Deer mice are mostly found in rural or semi-rural areas. Deer mice differ in appearance from house mice. They are generally brown or tan, with a white belly and white feet. They also have dark eyes and ears that are larger than a house mouse.

