

Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome Fact Sheet

What is it?

Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome is an acute viral disease transmitted from rodents (most commonly deer mice) to humans. The fatality rate can be as high as 35-50%. In survivors, recovery from the acute illness is rapid but full convalescence may take weeks to months.

What are the signs and symptoms?

The illness includes fever, muscles aches and pains, and digestive complaints, followed by the abrupt onset of respiratory distress and low blood pressure. It then progresses rapidly to respiratory failure and shock.

How is it spread?

Hantavirus is spread to people when they breathe in the virus or dust particles contaminated by infected rodent droppings, urine or saliva, or from a bite from an infected rodent. Indoor exposure in closed, poorly ventilated homes, vehicles and outbuildings is especially important. Activities such as dry sweeping may increase the chance of breathing in infected dust particles. Person to person spread appears to be rare, but further study is required.

What is the incubation period?

It is thought to be about 2 weeks, with a range of a few days to 6 weeks.

How can I protect myself?

Practice rodent control.

Take precautions when cleaning up any areas contaminated by rodents:

- Disinfect rodent-contaminated areas by spraying disinfectant solution (eg. diluted bleach) prior to cleaning.
- Do not sweep or vacuum - use a wet mop or moistened towel.
- Avoid inhaling dust by using approved respirators.

Other Questions?

Talk to your health care provider or call our Communicable Disease Program at 613-966-5500 x349. Toll Free 1-800-267-2803 | TTY Dial 711 (1-800-267-6511) | www.hpepublichealth.ca

References

- Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington Public Health, Hantavirus, June 1996.
- Heymann, D.L., (2008). *Control of Communicable Diseases Manual*. (19th Ed.). Washington, D.C.: American Public Health Association.

CD-185

2011/04/14

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