



Hantavirus Prevention Factsheet

What is Hantavirus

Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS) is a **severe, sometimes fatal, respiratory disease** caused by infection with hantaviruses. In North America, these viruses are carried by certain rodents, including **deer mice, white-footed mice, rice rats, and cotton rats.**

How Does it Spread

HPS most commonly spreads when people have contact with infected rodents or their urine, droppings, and saliva. You can be infected by:

- Breathing in air contaminated with fresh rodent urine, droppings, or nesting materials.
- Touching contaminated materials and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Being bitten or scratched by an infected rodent.
- Eating food contaminated by rodent saliva or waste.

Prevention Strategy: Seal, Trap and Clean

1. Seal your home to keep rodents out.

The best way to protect yourself is to keep wild mice and rats out of your living areas.

- **Seal Holes:** Mice can fit through holes the width of a pencil (1/4 inch). Use steel wool and caulk for small holes, and metal sheeting, cement, or hardware cloth for larger gaps.
- **Check Inside & Out:** Inspect areas around windows, doors, pipes under sinks, and vents.
- **Eliminate Food Sources:** Keep food and pet food in thick plastic, metal, or glass containers with tight lids.

2. Trap to reduce the rodent population around your home.

- **Use Snap Traps:** Place traps against walls where rodent activity is seen. Use a pea-sized amount of peanut butter as bait.
- **Avoid Glue/Live Traps:** **DO NOT** use these, as they can cause rodents to urinate in fear, increasing your risk of getting sick.
- **Safety First:** Keep all traps and poison baits out of reach of children and pets.

3. Disinfect and clean the right way.

- **NEVER** sweep or vacuum up rodent urine, droppings, **or nests**. This can stir up the virus and increase your risk of inhaling it.
- **Ventilate:** Before cleaning infested cabins, sheds, or vehicles, open all doors and windows for at least **20–30 minutes** to air the area out.
- **Wear Protection:** Always wear rubber or plastic gloves. To protect against hantavirus when cleaning areas like attics, cabins, or sheds, wear a disposable **N95 respirator** as a minimum. For heavy infestations or highly dusty environments, upgrade to an **N100 or P100 (HEPA) respirator** for maximum safety.
- **Disinfect First:** Use a commercial disinfectant (labeled "Disinfectant") or a bleach solution (1.5 cups of bleach per 1 gallon of water).
- **The 5-Minute Rule:** Spray the waste until very wet and **let it soak for 5 minutes** before wiping it up with paper towels. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water immediately after completing the cleanup.

Symptoms and Seeking Care

Symptoms typically begin 1 to 8 weeks after exposure and include fever, fatigue, and muscle aches, followed by shortness of breath and coughing.

Seek medical attention immediately if you develop difficulty breathing after being exposed to rodents or rodent waste.

For more information, contact the Pueblo Department of Public Health and Environment at 719-583-4307 or visit www.cdc.gov/hantavirus.

