



Gila County
Health & Emergency Management

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome Fact Sheet

Background

Hantavirus is a family of rodent-borne viruses, some of which cause illness in humans. Infection with North American strains of hantavirus is called hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS). HPS is a rare, but severe respiratory illness. HPS was first documented in the four corners area of the United States in 1993. HPS is most common in the western part of the United States.

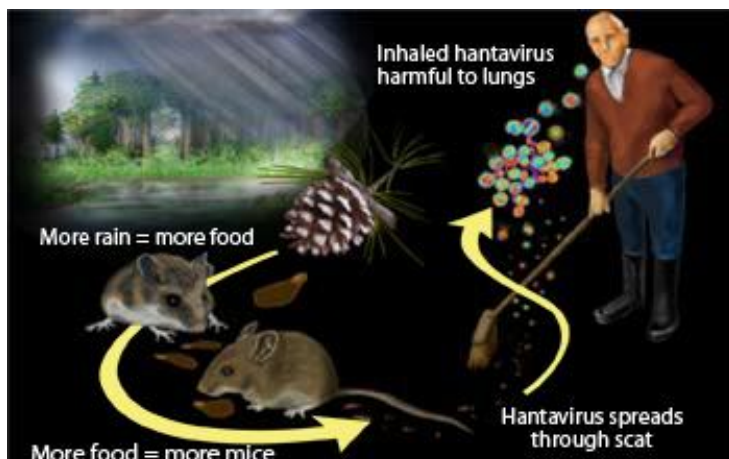
Symptoms

Symptoms develop 1 to 6 weeks after exposure. Early symptoms of hantavirus are flu-like symptoms such as fever, chills, dizziness, headache, and muscle aches. HPS is characterized by a sudden onset of shortness of breath and fluid in the lungs.

Transmission

Hantavirus is transmitted in the urine and droppings of infected rodents. Common methods of infection are:

- Breathing in the virus when contaminated rodent urine and droppings are stirred up into the air
- Touching your eyes, nose, or mouth after touching contaminated material
- Being bitten by an infected rodent



Graphic by Zina Deretsky, National Science Foundation

Treatment

There is no specific treatment, cure or vaccine for HPS. It is a very serious disease, and it is important to get medical care as early as possible. HPS is fatal in about 35% of cases, but early supportive care can improve survival rates. Those with severe illness may require hospitalization in an intensive care unit. Seek medical care if you are very ill with a fever or if you experience shortness of breath.

Prevention

Eliminating or minimizing contact with rodents and their droppings is the best prevention. To do this:

- Seal up holes in your home to keep rodents out
- Trap any rodents around your home
- Clean up food that is easy for rodents to get to
- Do not stay in any cabins or tents with signs of rodent activity
- Air out cabins or sheds before cleaning them
- Spray rodent droppings with a solution of bleach and water before wiping them up
- Wash hands after cleaning rodent droppings
- Never sweep dry rodent droppings
- Never vacuum dry rodent droppings
- Never use a leaf blower to clean up rodent droppings

For more information

If you need more information, please contact your primary care physician or Gila County Division of Health & Emergency Management at (928) 402-8811.