

Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS)

1. What is Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS)?

HPS is a rare but deadly lung disease that mainly spreads by inhaling a virus found in the droppings and nesting material of infected wild rodents. In California, HPS is usually found in deer mice. Deer mice are grey to brown on top and white underneath. While not all mice carry the virus, it's best to avoid contact with all wild rodents. Rodents from pet stores don't carry the virus.

2. What increases the risk for getting HPS?

People become infected with HPS when rodent urine, droppings, or nesting materials are moved, and the virus is sent into the air.

These activities increase the risk of infection:

- Cleaning up dead mice, mouse nests or droppings, especially when in enclosed and poorly ventilated spaces
- Being in areas like sheds, cabins, or barns where rodents might be present
- Handling live or dead deer mice

3. What are the symptoms of HPS?

First symptoms appear 1 to 5 weeks after coming into contact with the virus and can include fever, headache, and muscle aches. About 2 to 7 days later, illness can progress to difficulty breathing, often severe and requiring hospitalization and intensive care.

4. How is HPS treated?

This disease is best treated if it's found early. If you have been around wild rodents and have any of the symptoms of HPS, see a doctor right away.

5. How can you prevent getting HPS?

Keep wild rodents away by:

- Sealing up holes inside and outside the home
- Keeping garbage, woodpiles, and vegetable gardens at least 100 feet from the home
- Not leaving pet food outside
- Keeping garbage in tightly sealed containers and disposing of it at least weekly

Be very careful when cleaning areas that might be contaminated by wild rodents:

- Open windows and doors to air out potentially contaminated areas for at least 30 minutes before cleaning
- Spray dead rodents, nests, and droppings with a disinfectant or 10% bleach solution before vacuuming or wiping
- Wear latex or rubber gloves and eye protection when cleaning. When done clean them in disinfectant or bleach solution and wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- Items that cannot be disinfected (like paper, wood, and fabric) should be carefully placed in the sun for several hours. Sunlight can kill the virus.
- For highly infested areas, contact a professional rodent control service.



Key Points:

- HPS is a rare but deadly lung disease caused when people breathe in a virus carried by wild rodents.
- People are at risk for HPS when they breathe in specks of urine, droppings or nesting materials from infected wild rodents.
- To avoid HPS, be careful when staying in or cleaning areas where wild rodents might be present and keep wild rodents out of your home and workplaces.

For more information:

Los Angeles County,
Department of Public
Health

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/VectorHantaVirus.htm>

Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)

<https://www.cdc.gov/hantavirus/>

California Department of
Public Health

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/HantavirusPulmonarySyndrome.aspx>