

Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome

Agent: Hantavirus family

Mode of Transmission: Several different types of hantaviruses have been identified and each is associated with a different rodent species. Rodents infected with hantavirus do not become ill but they can transmit the virus to humans when their urine or feces are aerosolized and inhaled.

Signs/Symptoms: Fever, muscle pain, and gastrointestinal complaints followed by an abrupt onset of respiratory distress and decreased blood pressure. Respiratory failure and shock follow quickly.

Prevention: Exclude rodents from houses and other buildings. Disinfect rodent-contaminated areas with a spray disinfectant solution prior to cleaning. Contaminated areas should be cleaned with a wet mop and not be vacuumed or swept. Use approved respirators to avoid inhalation of dust when cleaning or removing potentially infected materials.

Other Important Information: Although most common in the southwestern part of the country, hantavirus infections can occur anywhere.

No cases of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS) were reported in Virginia during 2008. The only hantavirus case reported in Virginia occurred in 1993. In 2004, a resident of southwest Virginia died due to HPS following an exposure that occurred in West Virginia. For surveillance purposes, that case was attributed to West Virginia.