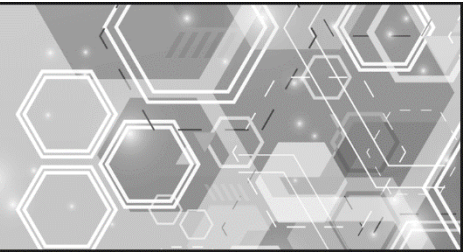




Durham Region Health Department **Facts about...**



Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome

What is it?

Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS) is a rare but severe respiratory illness caused by breathing in virus particles from infected rodents, particularly from deer mice. Different hantaviruses are found worldwide. In North America, the Sin Nombre virus is a type of hantavirus carried by deer mice and is the main cause of HPS in Canada. Ontario has not reported any cases of HPS since it became reportable in 2001.

How is it spread?

People get sick after breathing in airborne virus particles from rodent urine, droppings or saliva. The virus becomes airborne when environments are disrupted, such as when sweeping or cleaning. People are at greater risk of getting sick when they come into contact with the airborne virus particles inside or in poorly ventilated spaces. Spread can also happen through the bite of an infected rodent and through direct contact of rodent droppings with broken skin or mucous membranes like the mouth and nose.

In North America, the most common hantavirus is the Sin Nombre virus, which is not known to spread person-to-person. The Andes virus, more commonly found in South America, is the only known strain that can spread person-to-person and usually only when there is close and prolonged contact with a person who is infected.

What do I look for?

HPS typically presents as a flu-like illness, with symptoms usually starting 2–6 weeks after exposure. Symptoms may include fever, headache, muscle aches, tiredness, dizziness, nausea or feeling sick to your stomach or diarrhea. This is followed by cough, shortness of breath and low blood pressure, and in some cases may progress to more serious heart and lung problems. The case fatality rate for HPS is 30–50% which means if 100 people were infected with HPS roughly 30 to 50 people would die from it.

How is it treated?

There are no vaccines or antiviral medicines for HPS. Treatment is supportive and focuses on treating respiratory symptoms under the direction of a health care provider.

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If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



How can I protect myself?

Rodent control in and around the home is the best way to preventing hantavirus infection:

- Eliminate food sources available to rodents and store food in rodent-proof containers
- Limit possible nesting sites and seal holes or other possible entrances that could allow rodents to enter the home
- Avoid inhalation of airborne particles by using approved masks and respirators when cleaning and disinfecting areas contaminated by rodents
- Wear gloves when cleaning and disinfecting rodent-contaminated areas
- Use a wet mop or disposable paper towel moistened with disinfectant to remove contamination. Do not dry sweep or vacuum contaminated areas. After cleaning, disinfect the area with disinfectant solution such as diluted bleach (1 part bleach:10 parts water)
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and running water
- Avoid direct contact with wild rodents and exposure to their urine, feces and saliva.

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