

# HANTAVIRUS DISEASE

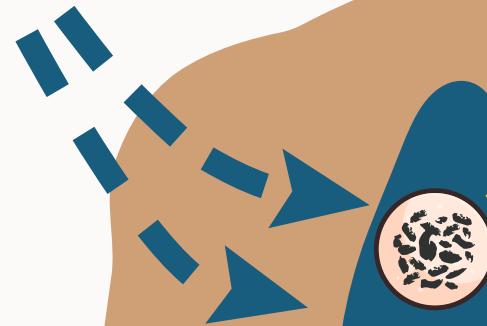


**1. Virus found in rodent feces**

**2. Infected feces becomes airborne**



**3. Inhaled by humans**



**5. Acute respiratory distress; serious infection that quickly worsens**

**Symptoms:** Early: Chills, fever, muscle aches. Later, 1-2 days: Dry cough, headache, nausea, vomiting, shortness of breath.

**Risk Groups:**

- Anyone cleaning (sweeping or vacuuming) poorly ventilated areas (e.g. cabins, sheds) with deer mouse feces, dried urine or nests.
- Anyone in close contact with deer mouse feces, dried urine or nests in poorly ventilated areas.
- Anyone handling firewood, if wood piles are contaminated with deer mouse feces, urine or nests.



# WHAT IS HANTAVIRUS DISEASE?



Hantavirus is a rare but serious illness spread by deer mice. Hantaviruses are a group of viruses that can cause severe illness in humans. In Canada, hantavirus pulmonary syndrome is spread by rodents including deer mice, white-footed mice and red-backed voles. Infections are most common in the spring when people clean buildings left vacant during the fall and winter.

## Prevention

Keep your home, workplace, cabin or campsite rodent-free. All rodent droppings are potentially harmful. You should:

- block openings that might let rodents in
- store food, water and garbage in containers with tightly fitted lids
- place mousetraps throughout buildings
- keep your yard clean
- stack woodpiles away from buildings



## Transmission

People can become infected with hantavirus when they:

- are in close contact with deer mouse feces, dried urine or nests in poorly ventilated areas.
- inhale virus particles from rodent urine, droppings or saliva that have been released into the air when rodent waste is stirred up from vacuuming or sweeping.
- touch objects or eat food contaminated with the urine, droppings or saliva of infected rodents or are bitten by a rodent infected with hantavirus.



## Symptoms

The initial symptoms of the disease may appear from one to six weeks after the exposure, with an average of two to three weeks. Once symptoms appear, the disease can progress rapidly and become life-threatening within a short time.

**Early:** Chills, Fever, Muscle aches

**Later, 1-2 days:** Dry cough, headache, nausea, vomiting, shortness of breath



## Guidance

To properly clean and disinfect rodent droppings safely:

- Ventilate the area by opening doors and windows for 30 minutes.
- Do not sweep or vacuum droppings to avoid airborne particles.
- Wear rubber/plastic gloves and, in confined spaces, wear a HEPA-filtered respirator (e.g., KN-95 mask).
- Spray droppings with a 1 part bleach to 9 parts water mixture. Let the area soak for 10 minutes.
- Use paper towels or a wet mop to remove the droppings.
- Wash gloves in disinfectant and hot soapy water before removing them. Then wash your hands thoroughly.
- Clean the wet mop with disinfectant and hot soapy water after use.



**WARNING:** If the area cannot be ventilated for 30 minutes with open doors or windows, hire a professional with proper protective equipment and training.

**NOTE:** Persons who develop a fever or respiratory illness within 45 days of the last potential exposure should immediately seek medical attention and inform the attending nurse/physician of the potential risk of hantavirus infection.