

# HANTAVIRUS

## Patient Information Fact Sheet

### ›What is hantavirus?

Hantavirus normally affects rodents (or their urine and droppings), but humans can also be infected and progress to Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS), which can be fatal. Early symptoms of HPS include fatigue, fever, muscle pain, severe breathing difficulties, and low blood pressure. Late symptoms such as coughing and shortness of breath appear 4–10 days after the initial phase as the lungs fill with fluid. The mortality rate is 38%.

### ›How do you contract and diagnose hantavirus?

Aerosol transmission from rodent waste is presumed (eg, breathing dust that includes the feces of infected rodents). Person-to-person transmission of Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome has rarely been reported. The incubation period is not known for sure, but symptoms tend to appear 1–5 weeks after exposure to rodent droppings, urine or saliva. Diagnosis is confirmed by a blood test.

Avoid rodent-infested areas and keep food in rodent-proof conditions. Disinfect rodent-infested areas by spraying a dilute bleach solution prior to cleaning, especially seasonally or rarely opened buildings, where feces can collect undisturbed.

### ›How is Hantavirus treated?

According to the CDC, there is no specific treatment or cure for hantavirus infection. Patients who are suspected to have contracted hantavirus should receive appropriate, broad-spectrum antibiotic therapy while awaiting confirmation of a diagnosis, including hospitalization to facilitate monitoring and treatment. In intensive care, patients are given oxygen therapy to help them through the period of severe respiratory distress.

### ›Further information

Centers for Disease Control: [www.cdc.gov/hantavirus/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/hantavirus/index.html)

Last reviewed: May 2013

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