

What is Hantavirus?

Hantaviruses are a group of viruses passed by rodents that can cause severe, sometimes life-threatening diseases in humans. Hantavirus infections are rare but severe, with up to 38% of infected patients dying. Past research has shown, in the Americas, hantaviruses can cause Hantavirus Cardiopulmonary Syndrome (HCPS). In Europe and Asia, hantaviruses primarily cause Hemorrhagic Fever with Renal Syndrome (HFRS).^{1,3}

Did you know?

There are no specific treatments or licensed vaccines for hantaviruses. Prevention relies on reducing exposure to rodents and contaminated environments.³

Symptoms

HCPS can start showing symptoms after 1 to 8 weeks:

Early symptoms



Fever and chills



Fatigue



Headache



Muscle ache



Gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain or diarrhea^{1,4}

Later symptoms:



Cough and shortness of breath



Fluid buildup in the lungs



Rapid breathing or respiratory distress



Low blood pressure and shock

HFRS can start showing symptoms 1 to 2 weeks from exposure:

Early symptoms



Back and abdominal pain



Fever, chills, nausea



Intense headaches and blurred vision

Later symptoms:



Low blood pressure or lack of blood flow



Internal bleeding



Acute kidney failure

Fact: Hantavirus infections can be severe. Early medical care and supportive treatment are critical, making early recognition and prevention essential.^{2,5}

How Hantavirus is Transmitted to Humans



Spread by rodent droppings, urine, saliva and bedding materials



Transmitted when cleaning up rodent-contaminated materials

Less common routes include surface contact, bites or ingestion of contaminated food

Fact: Person-to-person transmission is extremely rare.^{2,3}

Take Action

Hantavirus control strategies focus on rodent management, exclusion, sanitation and safe cleaning and sanitation practices.

Key control measures include:

✦ Rodent Prevention and Exclusion

- Seal gaps and entry points in buildings
- Eliminate food sources with storage and waste handling
- Reduce clutter and remove nesting sites in and around structures³
- Engage certified pest control operators to monitor and prevent infestations

✦ Risk Reduction in Occupational and High-Exposure Settings

- Educate workers on risks and symptoms
- Use enhanced personal protective equipment (PPE) and respiratory protection in high exposure conditions
- Establish procedures for safe cleanup, waste disposal and incident reporting

Clean Thoroughly & Regularly

✦ Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection

- Avoid sweeping or vacuuming rodent-contaminated areas to prevent aerosolizing viral particles
- Apply wet cleaning methods using an EPA-registered disinfectant or bleach solution to fully saturate contaminated materials before removal
- Wear appropriate PPE such as gloves and a mask during cleanup

Assume that old rodent droppings remain a risk and follow all recommended precautions when cleaning contaminated areas, even as the virus degrades over time.²

References & Further Information

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). About Hantavirus [cdc.gov]
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Hantavirus Prevention [cdc.gov]
3. World Health Organization (WHO). Hantavirus – Fact Sheet (May 2026) [who.int]
4. Mayo Clinic. Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome: Symptoms & Causes [mayoclinic.org]
5. Cleveland Clinic. Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome: Causes & Treatment [my.clevelandclinic.org]

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