

IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

HANTAVIRUS

Hantaviruses are a family of rodent-borne viruses that can cause human illness. One type is found in North and South America and causes Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS). The second type of hantavirus is found mostly in Asia and Europe and causes a different kind of illness.

Symptoms

- Symptoms of hantavirus infection usually develop between 5 and 42 days after exposure. No one knows for sure the exact length of time.
- The first symptoms over the American strains of hantavirus include:
 - Fever, chills
 - Muscle aches (often severe)
 - Sometimes nausea, vomiting, and abdominal pain
- Late symptoms of HPS appear 4-10 days after the initial phase of illness and include:
 - Coughing
 - Tightness in the chest, and shortness of breath
 - Hantavirus often progresses to severe breathing problems. It is fatal about 40% of the time.
- Signs of Asian or European hantavirus include headache, fever, flushed face, redness of the eyes and making less urine (pee) than usual. Symptoms develop in one to six weeks after exposure.

Transmission

- Only rodents carry the virus. The deer mouse is the main carrier of hantavirus; however, other wild rodents can cause problems as well. While deer mice live in Ohio, there have been no known cases in Ohio.
- Any activity that puts you in contact with rodent droppings, urine, saliva, or nesting materials can place you at risk for infection. The chance of being exposed to hantavirus is greatest when people work, play, or live in closed spaces where rodents are actively living. Construction, utility and pest control workers can be exposed when they work in crawl spaces, under houses, or vacant buildings where rodents live.
- In addition, individuals can be exposed to hantaviruses through rodent bites from infected animals.
- In the U.S., hantavirus cannot be transmitted from one person to another.

Treatment

- There is no specific treatment, cure, or vaccine for hantavirus infection. However, if infected individuals are recognized early and receive medical care in an intensive care unit, they may do better. In intensive care, patients are placed on breathing machines to help them through the severe period of infection.

Prevention

- Eliminate or minimize contact with rodents in your home or workplace. Seal up holes and gaps in your home or garage. Place traps in and around your home to decrease rodent infestation. Eliminate potential food sources. Clear the area around your house of junk, debris or brush where mice will nest.
- Tightly cover outdoor garbage cans and pet food containers and raise them 12 inches off the ground.
- When cleaning in areas inhabited by rodents, wear gloves and avoid raising dust. Spray the floor with a disinfectant to kill the virus. Then wipe the surface with a damp towel and then mop with a disinfectant. Place debris in a plastic bag, seal it, and place it inside another plastic bag before disposal.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.



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