



# DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT HANTAVIRUS?

## We have answers.

### What are hantaviruses?

Hantaviruses are a group of viruses. They can cause serious illness in humans.<sup>1</sup>

### How can I get a hantavirus?

Anyone can get a hantavirus. Hantaviruses usually spread through contact with a rodent that has a hantavirus or that rodent's urine, droppings, or saliva. People usually become infected by:

- breathing in air that contains the virus near rodent urine, droppings, or nesting materials
- touching a surface or materials that have infected rodent urine, droppings, or saliva on it and then touching their eyes, nose, mouth, or open skin before washing their hands.<sup>1,2</sup>

### Can hantavirus spread from person to person?

Most hantaviruses do not spread from person to person. However, a rare type of hantavirus called Andes virus (ANDV) can spread from one person to another if there is close and prolonged contact.<sup>2,3</sup> Overall, person-to-person spread is very uncommon.

### How does hantavirus cause serious illness?

Hantaviruses are responsible for two main types of diseases in humans: hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS) and hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome (HFRS). HPS is a respiratory disease that affects the lungs. HFRS is a kidney disease. Both HPS and HFRS can lead to death and may require hospitalization.<sup>1,2</sup>

### Where is hantavirus most common?

Most cases of hantavirus are in eastern China and Europe. Hantavirus can occur in the

United States. Most of those cases are found in the western half of the United States.<sup>2</sup>

Different hantaviruses are more common in certain areas of the world. The different hantaviruses also cause different medical problems. For example, HPS is mainly found in North, Central, and South America, with high case numbers in Argentina, Chile, and Brazil. In contrast, cases of HFRS are more common in Asia and Europe.<sup>1,2</sup>

### Should I be worried about getting the virus?

Globally, hantavirus infections are relatively uncommon. If an outbreak occurs, it is closely monitored by public health officials. These officials help communicate the level of risk to the public.<sup>3</sup>

### What are common signs and symptoms?

Early symptoms can resemble the flu, including fever, chills, fatigue, muscle aches, headaches, nausea, and abdominal pain.<sup>1,2</sup> These symptoms are common in many illnesses, making it hard to diagnose hantavirus at the start of the illness.

In severe cases, symptoms may progress to coughing, shortness of breath, low blood pressure, or kidney problems.<sup>1,2</sup>

### When should I seek medical care?

Seek medical care if you may have had contact with a rodent or its urine, droppings, or saliva and then develop symptoms of a hantavirus infection (such as fever, fatigue, muscle aches, coughing, or shortness of breath).<sup>1</sup> Seek medical care right away if you have trouble breathing or worsening symptoms.

Tell your health care provider about any recent travel and contact with rodents.<sup>2</sup>



# DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT HANTAVIRUS? (Continued)

## Is there a treatment?

There are no specific treatments (antivirals). Early medical care is important and can prevent death. Severe cases may require hospitalization, breathing support, or intensive care support.<sup>1,2</sup>

## How can we prevent hantavirus in our communities?

There is no vaccine for hantaviruses. You can take steps to help reduce the risk of infection:<sup>1,4,5</sup>

- Seal holes and gaps in places like your home and garage to keep rodents out.
- Store food in rodent-proof containers.
- Air out enclosed spaces before cleaning.
- Wear gloves and masks when cleaning areas where rodents may have been.
- Safely clean areas with rodent droppings by using disinfectants. (Do not sweep or vacuum. This can stir up dry materials and allow the virus to get into the air.)
- Stay informed about any ongoing outbreaks of hantavirus.

## Are pet rodents safe?

Pet rodents (like pet mice and rats) can carry hantaviruses. A hantavirus could be spread from the pet to a person through a bite or contact with the pet's urine, droppings, saliva, or bedding.

Young children, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems may be at greater risk of serious illness. People who handle rodents or clean their cages should take steps to reduce their risk.<sup>1,5</sup>

## Who can help answer my questions?

Talk to your health care provider if you have symptoms or concerns about hantavirus. You can also contact your local or state public health department for more information and guidance.

## Sources

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