

# SPOTLIGHT ON SAFETY

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## HANTAVIRUS



Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS) is a deadly disease transmitted by infected rodents through urine, droppings, saliva, or a bite. A person may be exposed to Hantavirus by breathing contaminated dust after disturbing or cleaning rodent droppings or nests, or by living or working in rodent-infested settings.

### *General Prevention Tips*

- Keep rodents out of your home and workplace. Always take precautions when cleaning, sealing and trapping rodent-infested areas
- Seal cracks and gaps in buildings that are larger than 1/4 inch, including window and door sills, around pipes under sinks, in foundations, attics and other rodent entry holes
- Trap indoor rats and mice with snap traps
- Remove rodent food sources - keep food (including pet food) in rodent proof containers
- Do not work inside poorly-ventilated buildings or enclosures within a fieldwork area, especially where deer mice or other rodent contamination is present, unless the space has been thoroughly ventilated and respiratory protection is used

### *Cleaning Rodent Infested Areas*

- Open windows and doors to ventilate the contaminated area for at least two hours
- Wear strong rubber gloves
- Do not stir up dust by vacuuming, sweeping, or any other way
- Thoroughly wet contaminated areas including trapped mice, droppings, and nests with a 10% bleach solution or household disinfectant; for hypochlorite (bleach) solution: mix 1 and ½ cups of household bleach in 1 gallon of water
- Once everything is soaked for 15 minutes, remove all of the nest material, mice or droppings with a damp towel and mop or sponge the area with the bleach solution or household disinfectant
- Spray dead rodents with disinfectant and double-bag along with all cleaning materials - bury, burn, or throw out rodent appropriately
- Disinfect gloves with disinfectant or soap and water before taking them off
- After taking off the clean gloves, wash hands with soap and water (or use a waterless alcohol-based hand rub when soap is not available)

### *Exposure & Treatment*

- Fever, muscle aches, and tiredness occur 1 - 3 weeks after exposure
- People who are sick with hantavirus infection begin to cough and have shortness of breath after 4 - 10 days
- Untreated hantavirus can lead to death - see your health care provider immediately if you develop signs of exposure