

# Hantavirus



Hantavirus is a virus that is carried by some rodents. In Washington State, deer mice are the only rodents known to carry hantavirus. Hantavirus can cause a rare but deadly disease called Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS).

## How do people get infected?

- Breathing in virus
- Touching face after touching virus
- Being bitten or scratched by rodent
- Eating contaminated food

Hantavirus does not spread person-to-person

### Common activities that can expose a person to Hantavirus:

- Cleaning up rodent urine, droppings, & nests without wearing rubber or plastic gloves
- Entering a home, shed, camper, or cabin infested with rodents
- Working in areas, such as barns or cars, where rodents live
- Participating in recreational outdoor activities where exposure to rodent habitat may occur

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of HPS begin 1–8 weeks after exposure to the virus.

First 3–5 days of illness is similar to the flu:

- fever sore
- nausea
- muscles
- vomiting
- headache
- fatigue

As the disease gets worse, it causes coughing & shortness of breath as fluid fills the lungs. HPS is serious & people with HPS usually need hospitalization.

One out of three people with HPS die.

## Prevention of Hantavirus



### Avoid all wild rodents

Rodents can carry harmful viruses and bacteria which can spread to humans through the air or direct contact.



### Keep rodents out of your home

- Seal up cracks & gaps in buildings that are larger than 1/4"
- Keep food & garbage in thick plastic or metal containers with tight lids.
- Trim trees back & don't allow plants to grow up alongside your house.
- Stack firewood 18" off the ground & away from all buildings.



### Keep rodents out of your vehicle

- Keep your car clean and safe. Avoid leaving food, remove any crumbs or debris.
- Use deterrents like peppermint oil or mothballs.



### Use snap traps indoors

Place the traps near where you have found evidence of rodents



### Clean up after rodents

See next page on "Safely Cleaning Up After Rodents"



Whitman County  
Public Health

Growing A Healthier Community

- ➔ Personal & Family Health
- ➔ Community Health
- ➔ Environmental Health

**PULLMAN**  
1205 SE Pro Mall Blvd  
#203 Pullman, WA 99163  
**509.332.6752**

**COLFAX**  
310 N Main Street  
#108 Colfax, WA 99111  
**509.397.6280**

# Safely Cleaning Up After Rodents

If you identify a rodent nest, droppings, or infestation, it's important to clean up safely. Use these steps to reduce the risk of infection:



## 1. Vent The Space

Ventilate the space before cleaning by opening doors and windows for at least 30 min

Avoid stirring up dust; don't use a leaf blower, vacuum, sweep, or use cleaning methods such as dry dusting.

## 2. Wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)



Wear rubber, latex, vinyl, or nitrile (synthetic rubber) gloves.



Dust masks may provide additional protection against inhaling dust particles, but should not be considered protection against the virus. Fitted respirators are considered the most protective.

## 3. Wet The Area

Thoroughly wet any contaminated areas — including trapped or dead rodents, droppings, and nests — with a 10% bleach solution.

### Here's how to do it:

- Mix 1½ cups of household bleach in 1 gallon of cold water. Or, 1 part bleach to 9 parts water. Make this solution fresh before each use.
- Use a spray bottle to spray the affected area with bleach and water solution until very wet.
- Let everything soak for 5–10 minutes.
- Use paper towels or rags that can be discarded to pick up or wipe up rodents, nest material, mice, and/or droppings, and/or urine. Mop or sponge the area with the bleach solution.

## 4. Clean-up

- Use paper towels or rags that can be discarded to pick up or wipe up rodents, nest material, mice, and/or droppings, and/or urine.
- Mop or sponge the area with the bleach solution.
- Double-bag the dirty rags and any dead rodents and place them in a sealed garbage can.
- Wash gloves with disinfectant or soap and water before removing them, then wash your hands with soap and water after removing your gloves.



Whitman County  
Public Health

Growing A Healthier Community

- ➔ Personal & Family Health
- ➔ Community Health
- ➔ Environmental Health

**PULLMAN**  
1205 SE Pro Mall Blvd  
#203 Pullman, WA 99163  
**509.332.6752**

**COLFAX**  
310 N Main Street  
#108 Colfax, WA 99111  
**509.397.6280**