

Hantavirus Prevention

What is hantavirus?

Hantavirus is a viral disease associated with wild rodents. In California, hantavirus is associated with deer mice. Commensal rodents, such as roof rats, Norway rats, and house mice, and other wildlife, do not carry hantavirus.

How does a person get hantavirus?

Hantavirus is most frequently transmitted when humans breathe in dust contaminated with the urine, saliva, or droppings of infected rodents, such as when opening or cleaning previously unused buildings.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of hantavirus infection usually develop between one and 8 weeks following exposure. Early symptoms include fatigue, fever, and muscle aches, followed by a severe respiratory infection that is often fatal. There is no treatment, cure, or vaccine for hantavirus infection.

What's the risk?

Historical data shows that around 7% of the deer mice tested in San Mateo County have antibodies for hantavirus. Although deer mice do not enter homes as readily as house mice, they often infest buildings that are vacant or rarely entered, including summer cabins, trail shelters, sheds, and barns.

You can reduce your risk by keeping rodents out of your home and other buildings.



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How Can I Reduce my Risk?

Because it is not always possible to determine what species of mouse is causing an infestation, and because human hantavirus infection is often fatal, ALL rodent infestations must be treated as though there is a risk of hantavirus.

1. Ventilate the area overnight by opening doors and windows.
2. Use rubber gloves and wear a half-mask air purifying respirator with a HEPA filter while cleaning.
3. Apply household disinfectants at a maximum recommended concentration to dead rodents, rodent droppings, nests, contaminated traps, and surrounding area and allow for at least 15 minutes contact time before removal.
4. Clean the affected area with paper towels or a mop. DO NOT SWEEP OR VACUUM.
5. Double bag the disinfectant-soaked rodent and clean-up material securely in plastic bags.
6. Before removing gloves, wash gloved hands in disinfectant, and then in soap and water. Thoroughly wash hands with soap and water after removing the gloves.
7. Dispose of gloves and clean-up materials with other household waste.

Need Professional Help?

The District can provide a free rodent inspection on your property, but cannot provide rodent control services to individual residents. If you choose to use a professional rodent control service, your pest control operator (PCO) should provide you with a thorough inspection and a written report containing:

- The kind of rodents present
- Harborage and food sources
- Rodent-proofing recommendations
- Proposed control methods

Smart Rodent Control

Trapping rodents is the best method of control. It should be done after rodent proofing is completed. Trapping is especially desirable when rodenticides cannot be used near food, small children, or where domestic animals or livestock are present. Traps should be used indoors to prevent the serious odor and fly problems that can occur when poisoned rodents die in walls.

Commercially available rodenticides for rat control are EXTREMELY toxic to people and pets, and should be used with caution. If you do decide to use a rodenticide, always follow the manufacturer's label precautions and instructions. Always use rodenticides in child-proof bait stations and never use these products inside the house, attic, or basement.



SAN MATEO COUNTY
MOSQUITO & VECTOR
CONTROL DISTRICT

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Preventing Rodent Infestations

Rats and mice will seek out environments where food, water and shelter are found. Preventing rodent problems depends on eliminating these attractants. To discourage rodents from visiting your property:

- Cover all garbage cans
- Harvest fruit as soon as it ripens, and pick up fallen fruit
- Don't leave birdseed on the ground
- Store wood and lumber at least 18 inches above the ground and 12 inches from walls or fences
- Never leave pet food out overnight, and store it in closed metal containers
- Keep all vegetation trimmed away from roofs, walls, fences, poles, and trees
- Keep rodents out of structures by sealing all openings larger than a nickel

San Mateo County Mosquito and Vector Control District

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Monday-Friday
8a.m. to 4:30p.m.

www.smcmvcd.org