

Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

[Kathy Harben] Hello, I'm Kathy Harben. I'm talking with Dr. Adam MacNeil, an epidemiologist with Viral Special Pathogens Branch at CDC. This conversation is based on an article about Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome, which appears in the July 2011 issue of CDC's journal, Emerging Infectious Diseases. Welcome, Dr. MacNeil.

[Adam MacNeil] Thank you, Kathy.

[Kathy Harben] Dr. MacNeil, what is hantavirus pulmonary syndrome?

[Adam MacNeil] Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome, or HPS, is a severe respiratory infection caused by certain types of viruses known as hantaviruses. Initial symptoms of HPS resemble many common illnesses and include fever, muscle aches, headache, and possibly vomiting. Then, after about a week, people rapidly develop severe difficulty in breathing. In the United States, more than one of every three cases of HPS results in death. This disease was discovered in 1993, during an outbreak in the Southwestern United States. Since that time, we've found the disease also exists in Canada, as well as parts of Central and South America.

[Kathy Harben] How do people catch it?

[Adam MacNeil] Hantaviruses are carried by rodents. People become infected by breathing in dried rodent urine or feces. This usually happens to people in closed spaces, such as basements, garages, or sheds, that have rodent contamination. It's also possible for a person to be infected following a bite from an infected rodent.

[Kathy Harben] Can someone get it from another person?

[Adam MacNeil] No. In the United States, no one is known to have gotten hantavirus from another person.

[Kathy Harben] Dr. MacNeil, this seems like a very serious virus. Should we be concerned?

[Adam MacNeil] HPS is a severe disease, however it's also an *extremely* rare disease. We typically get between 20 and 30 HPS cases a year in the United States. Most cases of HPS occur in the southwestern United States. However, rodents that carry hantaviruses can be found across the entire continental United States.

[Kathy Harben] How can people protect themselves?

[Adam MacNeil] Since hantaviruses are carried by rodents, we recommend that people minimize contact with rodents in and around their homes. This includes sealing up properties to prevent rodent contamination, trapping rodents inside homes, and safely cleaning up rodent droppings and nests with disinfectant. For additional information on rodent control, visit the CDC website at www.cdc.gov.

[Kathy Harben] Thank you, Dr. MacNeil. I've been talking with Dr. Adam MacNeil about the article, *Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome, United States, 1993-2009*, which appears in the July 2011 issue of CDC's journal, Emerging Infectious Diseases. You can see the entire article online at www.cdc.gov/eid.

If you'd like to comment on this podcast, send an email to eideditor@cdc.gov. That's e-i-d-editor - one word - at c-d-c-dot-gov. I'm Kathy Harben, for Emerging Infectious Diseases.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.