



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Of Mice and Man

Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome in Four Pediatric Patients — Arizona, Colorado, and Washington, 2009

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

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome, or HPS, is a disease that is caused by people coming in contact with rodents. HPS is caught when dirt or dust containing rodent excretion or other bodily fluids is stirred up and breathed in or absorbed through broken skin. The result is a serious condition in which one of three reported cases has been fatal.

Dr. Barbara Knust is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Zoonotic, Vector-Borne, and Enteric Diseases. She's joining us today to discuss HPS. Welcome to the show, Barbara.

[Dr. Knust] Thank you, Bob. Glad to be here.

[Dr. Gaynes] Barbara, how many cases of HPS are reported each year in the United States?

[Dr. Knust] Well, the CDC receives only about 20 to 40 reports of HPS each year so it is not common; however, because HPS has such severe symptoms and a high fatality rate we are interested in every case that occurs.

[Dr. Gaynes] Is it more common in any particular region of the country?

[Dr. Knust] Yes, the Southwestern United States has the highest number of HPS illnesses; however, people have come down with HPS all over the country because the rodents who carry hantaviruses can be found in every state in the continental US. We recommend that people take proper precautions when handling any wild rodents, their droppings, or nesting materials.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are some signs of potential rodent infestation that people should look for?

[Dr. Knust] Well, two rodents that are often found around people are the deer mouse and the white footed mouse and they can both be identified by white markings on their feet and chest. There's tell-tale signs of rodent infestation which include the presence of small, cigar-shaped droppings and chewed up materials. They like to make nests which can often be found in protected spots between walls or under floorboards.

[Dr. Gaynes] If an infestation is identified, what steps do you recommend people take?

[Dr. Knust] People should be very careful to not stir up any dust or dirt if they find signs of rodent infestation and should think in terms of cleaning up, sealing up, and trapping up as they prevent rodent infestations in the future. So first clean up by using disposable gloves to protect yourself and washing your hands, using disinfectants or chlorine to soak up any rodent droppings, urine, or nesting materials and if an area has signs of heavy rodent infestation contact your local public health agency to receive further guidance. Very important is sealing up and trapping up to prevent future rodent infestations. All food sources, including human food and animal food, should be kept in rodent-proof containers. Houses should be checked twice a year for potential holes where rodents could enter and they should be sealed up.

[Dr. Gaynes] Barbara, what are the symptoms of HPS?

[Dr. Knust] HPS begins with a few days of flu-like symptoms which includes headache, fever, muscle aches and sometimes stomach upset. Then severe pneumonia symptoms follow with shortness of breath, cough, and chest pains. The lungs accumulate fluid which causes difficulty breathing.

[Dr. Gaynes] How is the condition treated?

[Dr. Knust] People with symptoms of HPS should be taken to a hospital where they will receive oxygen and fluids. There's no specific treatment for HPS and recovery can take a long time.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about HPS?

[Dr. Knust] Go to www.cdc.gov. In the search box, type "Hantavirus".

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks Barbara. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Barbara Knust about Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome.

Remember, if you think you might have an infestation of rodents in or around your home, be careful not to stir up any dust or dirt that might contain the virus. Then, clean up the area with household disinfectants or bleach.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

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