

## How does a person become infected with Sin Nombre Virus?

People become infected with SNV by breathing in microscopic particles of droppings or urine from an infected deer mouse.

Some activities that increase the risk of hantavirus are:

- Entering sheds, cabins, barns, or other buildings where deer mice are present.
- Cleaning or working in enclosed, poorly ventilated spaces contaminated by deer mice.
- Handling live or dead deer mice.
- Disturbing or cleaning up deer mouse or nest droppings.



## Rodents and Hantavirus

 Skagit County Department of Public Health



**Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome, or HPS, is a rare but often fatal disease of the lungs. HPS was first recognized in 1993 in the southwestern United States. Although there are many types of hantaviruses in the United States, Sin Nombre virus (SNV) is the specific hantavirus that causes HPS in the western United States.**

## What is Sin Nombre Virus?

Sin Nombre virus is carried by wild rodents.

In Washington, only one rodent species is known to carry SNV: the deer mouse.

Deer mice are similar in size to house mice (4-7 inches from nose to tail). Unlike the solid colored house mouse, deer mice are: grey to brown on top and white underneath, and have large unfurred ears.

Deer mice are found throughout the state in wild and undeveloped areas. They prefer brush, shrubs, and rocks, but will enter homes and buildings for food, shelter, and nesting material.

**Infected deer mice appear healthy and normal.**

Not all deer mice carry SNV and the proportion of infected mice varies throughout the state. Wild rodents in urban or suburban areas are likely to be house mice or roof rats, neither of which carries SNV. But, because it can be difficult to tell deer mice from other kinds of rodents that don't carry SNV, people should avoid contact with all wild rodents.

Dogs, cats, birds, insects, and other animals do not carry SNV.



## What are the symptoms of Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS)?

The first symptoms of HPS may develop 1-5 weeks after exposure to SNV.

Early symptoms look like the flu (fever, headache, and muscle aches, especially in the thighs, hips, back, and shoulders).

2 to 7 days after the first symptoms begin, HPS patients develop difficulty breathing. Breathing problems are often severe and require going to the hospital for intensive care.

Symptoms such as fever, headache, muscle pain, and shortness of breath are common to many different illnesses and are likely to be something other than HPS.

Any concerns you have about your health or possible exposure to SNV should be discussed with your health care provider.

Persons with HPS cannot give it to someone else.

There is no specific treatment for HPS and it can be fatal. Early medical attention can increase chances that a patient survives.



# HOW CAN I AVOID GETTING HANTAVIRUS PULMONARY SYNDROME?

## Keep Wild Rodents Out of Your Home

Infection with Sin Nombre virus can be prevented by keeping wild rodents out of homes and cleaning areas where rodents have been in a safe manner.

Look for signs of rodents around buildings like:

- Live or dead mice
- Nests
- Droppings
- Urine stains
- Gnaw marks

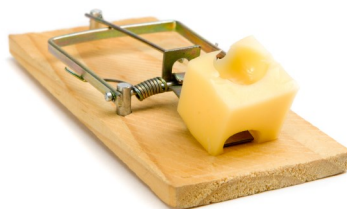
Check inside and behind kitchen cabinets, inside closets, around vents, behind appliances, around windows and doors, and around all electrical, water, gas, and sewer lines.

Check around windows and doors, between the foundation and the siding, around electrical lines and water pipes, and in eaves and vents in the roof.

Look for holes or gaps inside and outside the home. Seal all holes that are larger than 1/4 inch in diameter. Use cement, wire screening, hardware cloth, steel wool, or copper mesh material (such as Stuf-fit).

Reinforce the sealing material with caulk or expanding foam

Remove wild rodents from inside homes. Place spring-loaded “snap” traps along baseboards and in areas where rodents are entering the home.



Do not use glue or live traps as these may increase your risk of infection. Place traps near areas of rodent activity, but out of the reach of pets and children.

Examine traps regularly and remove trapped rodents promptly.

## You can reduce the number of rodents in and around your building by...

- Place woodpiles, vegetable gardens, trash cans, and pet food at least 100 feet from the house.
- Promptly remove uneaten pet food.
- Keep food in tightly sealed containers.
- Fix leaks in sprinklers or other outside pipes that might attract rodents as a water source.
- Keep garbage in tightly sealed containers and dispose of at least weekly.

## Clean Areas Contaminated by Wild Rodents

Dead rodents, rodent nests, and droppings should be removed and surfaces cleaned before areas are reused. When handling dead rodents or items contaminated by rodents, always take the following precautions:

Open windows and doors of a potentially contaminated area and allow it to air out for at least 30 minutes before cleaning.

**Do not sweep or vacuum wild rodent contaminated areas!**



Spray rodent carcasses, nests, droppings, and other potentially contaminated items and surfaces with bleach or disinfectant.

**IMPORTANT: Wear latex or rubber gloves and eye protection!**

Make bleach solution with 1 cup bleach to 9 cups water or use commercial disinfectant (formulated to kill viruses) diluted according to label instructions.

Allow the solution to sit for 5 minutes or according to label instructions before cleaning up with a mop or sponge.

## Clean Clothing, Bedding, Stuffed Animals

Wash potentially contaminated fabrics in hot water with detergent. Use rubber or latex gloves to do so. Machine-dry on a high setting or let air dry in the sun.

Shampoo rugs with commercial disinfectant or with a commercial-grade steam cleaner or shampoo.

Contaminated items that cannot be disinfected (e.g., paper, wood, fabric) should be carefully set outside in the sun for several hours.

Sunlight will inactivate the virus.

When done, rinse gloves in bleach or commercial disinfectant before removing.

Remove gloves, dispose in garbage, and thoroughly wash hands with soap and water.

## Dispose of Potentially Contaminated Traps

Place rodent carcasses, traps, and other contaminated items in a plastic bag.

Tie the bag, place inside a second bag and tie the second bag as well.

Throw away bags with other garbage.

