



HFRS, on the other hand, affects the kidneys. Symptoms start within one to two weeks after exposure and take up to eight weeks to develop (CDC, 2024). People infected by the disease may first experience intense headaches, back and abdominal pain, fever, chills, nausea, blurred vision, flushing of the face, inflammation or redness of the eyes, and/or a rash. Low blood pressure, lack of blood flow, internal bleeding, and acute kidney failure may also occur as the disease progresses. HFRS fatality rates range from about 1% to 15%, depending on the strain of hantavirus that caused the disease (CDC, 2024).

People with weakened immune systems, children aged five years and younger, and pregnant women are at greatest risk of serious illness from Hantavirus (CDC, 2024). Domesticated pet rodents like hamsters, guinea pigs, and gerbils from reputable pet stores are generally considered safe, but wild-caught rodents such as mice and rats, especially if kept as pets, are not recommended in these households. Pest exterminators and people who handle and clean up rodents should take extra precautions to avoid Hantavirus exposure.

Diagnosis and treatment

Complete recovery from Hantavirus infections can take several weeks to months (CDC, 2024). Diagnosing Hantavirus can be difficult in the early stages because symptoms can easily be confused with influenza and other respiratory conditions. Repeat laboratory testing may be required to establish diagnosis if the initial test is done before the virus can be detected in the body (CDC, 2024; NCCID, 2026).

Talk with your doctor or local healthcare provider immediately if you think you were exposed to rodents and may be at risk of Hantavirus infection. There is no specific treatment for Hantavirus infection and treatment options are limited. Supportive care (i.e., rest, hydration, treatment

of symptoms), close clinical monitoring, and management of complications are key to surviving Hantavirus infection (CDC, 2024; WHO, 2026).

What can you do to protect yourself?

There is no vaccine for Hantavirus protection (PHAC, 2026). Avoiding or minimizing contact with rodents and rodent waste can reduce the risk of Hantavirus infection (CDC, 2024). To reduce your risk of Hantavirus exposure, you can:



seal holes and gaps in your home or outbuildings, place traps in and around your home to decrease rodent infestation, and clean up any potential food sources that might attract rodents



routinely inspect your home and outbuildings for rodent urine, feces, or nesting materials, and immediately clean and disinfect any detected rodent waste using a disinfectant cleaning product or bleach solution (i.e., 1 part bleach diluted in 9 parts water)



wear protective gloves and a face mask when cleaning infested areas and avoid stirring up dust and releasing droplets of the virus into the air



place dead rodents, nesting materials, rodent waste, and any potentially contaminated materials into a tightly sealed plastic bag and discard it into a covered garbage can that is regularly emptied



contact a professional exterminator to remove rodents that have accessed heating and cooling ventilation systems (CDC, 2024; Interior Health, 2026)

For step-by-step information on inspecting, detecting, and cleaning rodent infestations, see:

How to clean up after rodents

[cdc.gov/healthy-pets/rodent-control/clean-up.html](https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-pets/rodent-control/clean-up.html)

Cleaning a shed, attic, cabin or barn? Protect against hantavirus

[interiorhealth.ca/stories/cleaning-shed-attic-cabin-or-barn-protect-against-hantavirus](https://www.interiorhealth.ca/stories/cleaning-shed-attic-cabin-or-barn-protect-against-hantavirus)

References

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