



Department of Health  
Agency of Human Services



## Health Department cautions Vermonters about Hantavirus



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**BURLINGTON** – The Health Department is reminding Vermonters to use caution when cleaning up rodent infested areas after an out-of-state resident recently contracted Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome while visiting Vermont.

The person who became ill was most likely exposed to rodent droppings while cleaning up a seasonal home in August and has since recovered from the disease.

Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome is a serious respiratory disease caused by an infection with a type of hantavirus. Symptoms include fatigue, fever, headaches, muscle aches, dizziness and chills followed by coughing and shortness of breath. Approximately one-third of people who have Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome die from the disease.

Most hantavirus infections occur in the western part of the U.S., but sporadic cases have been reported in the northeast. The Health Department recorded one other hantavirus case in 2000.

Most people are infected by breathing in dust contaminated with rodent droppings, urine, saliva or nesting materials. Sweeping or vacuuming stirs up contaminated dust and can put people at risk for hantavirus. Rodent infestation in and around the home is considered the primary risk for hantavirus.

The best way to reduce the risk of contracting HPS is to prevent rodents from entering your home by sealing up any holes inside and outside of the house, setting traps and properly storing any food. People should be particularly careful when first opening up a seasonal cabin or trailer.

If evidence of a rodent infestation is found, the Health Department recommends the following easy steps to clean up safely:

- Air out the area by opening nearby windows for at least 30 minutes.
- Do not sweep or vacuum up any droppings, urine or nesting material. Instead spray the materials and surrounding area with a mix of 10 parts water and one part bleach. Let it soak for at least five minutes.
- Wear rubber or latex gloves and clean up the materials using paper towels.
- Mop or clean hard surfaces with a diluted bleach solution. Steam clean or shampoo any furniture or carpeting. Wash bedding or clothing that may have been contaminated with laundry detergent and hot water.

For more information on hantavirus pulmonary syndrome, visit the Vermont Department of Health website at: <http://healthvermont.gov/prevent/hanta/hantavirus.aspx>

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