



Health, Housing, &
Community Services Department
Public Health Division
(510) 981-5300

Health Advisory

SEPTEMBER 5, 2012

HANTAVIRUS Pulmonary Syndrome in California

Janet Berreman, MD, MPH
Health Officer

Please distribute to all providers in your practice

Current Situation:

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has reported 6 confirmed cases of Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS) in visitors who stayed at Yosemite Valley's Curry Village since June of 2012. Two of the affected visitors have died. The park is contacting visitors who stayed in the Tent Cabins at Curry Village from mid-June through August to advise them of possible exposure to Hantavirus and to seek immediate medical attention if they develop symptoms of HPS.

Actions to be Taken:

1. EDUCATE patients that the HPS is a rare disease that is best prevented by avoiding contact with wild rodents and their excreta, and that testing of well or mildly ill persons is not beneficial.
2. CONSIDER the diagnosis of HPS in all persons presenting with clinically compatible illnesses; ask about potential rodent exposure or recent visits to Yosemite National Park.
3. CALL Berkeley Public Health at 510-981-5300 to report suspected cases and for approval before sending specimens to the State Public Health Laboratory for testing. See "Resources" below for link to laboratory submittal form.
4. CONSULT an infectious disease specialist and/or the CDC webpage for clinical information: <http://www.cdc.gov/hantavirus/technical/hps/clinical-manifestation.html>.
5. DIRECT patients with questions regarding the hantavirus situation in Yosemite National Park to the park phone line (209) 372-0822; or for general questions about HPS and hantavirus, to the websites listed at the end of this advisory.

Additional Information:

HPS is a rare but serious disease transmitted in California by wild deer mice. Since 1993 when HPS was first identified, 63 cases have been diagnosed in Californians and 590 nationally. The case fatality rate is 30-40%.

The incubation period for HPS is typically 2-4 weeks, with a range of a few days up to 6 weeks. Symptoms include an initial prodrome of fever, chills, myalgias, cough, headaches, and gastrointestinal symptoms. Laboratory abnormalities include thrombocytopenia, leukocytosis, hemoconcentration, hypoalbuminemia, and an increase in serum LDH. Chest radiographs may show bilateral interstitial infiltrates. The disease often progresses rapidly to respiratory distress requiring supplemental oxygen and/or intubation, non-cardiogenic pulmonary edema, and shock. There is no specific treatment available, but early recognition and administration of supportive care greatly increase the chance of survival.

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Laboratory testing of patients with symptoms consistent with HPS is required to confirm the diagnosis. Testing asymptomatic or mildly ill patients is not recommended. Serologic testing for hospitalized patients with suspected HPS is available from California's Public Health Laboratory, with approval from the City of Berkeley Public Health Division (510-981-5300)..

Sin Nombre Virus (SNV) is the specific Hantavirus that causes HPS in the western US. It is carried and shed by the deer mouse, especially in rural areas. Other rodents such as squirrels, chipmunks, rats, and house mice do not pose a risk of HPS to humans. Infected deer mice shed SNV in their urine, droppings and saliva, which can cause human infection if aerosolized and inhaled, as may occur when cleaning a small, confined space. When in the wilderness or in places harboring mice, people should keep food in tightly sealed containers, seal holes where mice could enter the dwelling, air out an enclosed space before entering or cleaning it, and spray areas contaminated with rodent droppings and urine with a 10% bleach solution or other disinfectant for 15 minutes before cleaning. Persons who clean rodent excreta should wear disposable gloves, seal waste tightly in plastic bags, and wash their hands. Wearing a face mask (ideally an N-95 or higher rating) may provide some additional (though not 100%) protection but does not replace the precautions of wetting contaminated areas, wearing gloves, and washing hands.

Resources for Additional Information

- Center for Disease Control (CDC): <http://www.cdc.gov/hantavirus/>
- City of Berkeley Public Health Division: http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/Public_Health/
- California Department of Public Health (CDPH):
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/HantavirusPulmonarySyndrome.aspx>
- CDPH Hantavirus Lab Specimen Submittal Form:
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/vrdl/Documents/Hantavirus%20Case%20Hx%20and%20Submit%20Forms23Feb11.pdf>
- CDC's Viral Special Pathogens Branch maintains a toll-free Hantavirus Hotline at: 877-232-3322, or 404-639-1510 (non-emergencies).

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