



1020 Washington St. N, Twin Falls, Idaho
208-737-5900 www.phd5.idaho.gov

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PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release

Contact: Mary Jensen, Public Health Nurse, 737-5969

SCPHD Reminds the Public the Dangers of Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS)

TWIN FALLS- South Central Public Health District is reminding the public of the dangers of Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS). HPS is a potentially deadly disease transmitted by infected rodents, which in Idaho are likely to be deer mice (distinguished by their white bellies). The virus is contained in their urine, droppings, or saliva. Humans can contract the disease when they breathe in aerosolized virus from these droppings. Anyone who comes into contact with these mice that carry Hantavirus is at risk of HPS. Rodent infestation in and around the home remains the primary risk for Hantavirus exposure. Even healthy individuals are at risk for HPS infection if exposed to the virus.

Early symptoms include fatigue, fever, and muscle aches, in hips, back, and sometimes shoulders. There may also be headaches, dizziness, chills, and abdominal problems such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain. About half of all HPS patients experience these symptoms.

“There are simple ways to take precautions against HPS, including wearing a mask and rubber gloves when cleaning any rodent-infested areas and clearing rodent food sources or nesting sites,” said Mary Jensen, SCPHD Nurse. “Cases of HPS are fairly rare; from 2000 to 2009, there have only been 10 reported cases in Idaho.”

There is no specific treatment, cure, or vaccine for Hantavirus infection. However, with early diagnosis and prompt medical attention, an infected individual can usually recover.

For more information, call Mary Jensen, Public Health Nurse, at 737-5969.

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