

## Seoul Virus

### What is it?

Seoul virus is a type of hantavirus—a group of viruses found in rats. While rats do not have symptoms of Seoul virus infection, it can cause illness in people.

### How is it transmitted?

People contract Seoul virus by breathing dust contaminated with urine, saliva, or feces of an infected rat.

Infection also may occur if contaminated material or dust gets into cuts or a mucous membrane, such as the eye. Ingesting food or water tainted by an infected rat may cause illness, too. Hantaviruses also can be transmitted by the bite of an infected rat. Seoul virus is not known to spread from person to person.

## Questions or concerns?

### Illinois Department of Public Health

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Springfield, IL 62761  
217-782-4977

69 W. Washington Street,  
35<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Chicago, IL 60602  
312-814-5278  
[www.dph.illinois.gov](http://www.dph.illinois.gov)

### Centers for Disease Control

1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30329  
800-232-4636  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

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## Reducing the Risk of Seoul Virus Infection From Pet Rats



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## Reducing Your Risk

- ❖ Keep cages clean and change bedding often
  - ❖ Always wash hands thoroughly after handling your rat
  - ❖ Clean cages in a well-ventilated area
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- ❖ Do not kiss rats or place them by your face
  - ❖ Cover cuts, scratches, or sores with a waterproof bandage before handling rats and thoroughly clean and cover any abrasions received when handling the animal
  - ❖ Do not use kitchen sinks for washing cages and thoroughly disinfect any washing location
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- ❖ Wash any contaminated bedding or clothing with detergent and hot water
  - ❖ Infections can be acquired by your pet rat through wild rats, so minimize outside contact
  - ❖ Do not keep rats in the bedroom and, if possible, house them in a well ventilated, sunlit room

## Symptoms

Symptoms may include:

- ❖ Fever
- ❖ Headache
- ❖ Gastrointestinal symptoms
- ❖ Muscle aches
- ❖ Cough
- ❖ Nausea/vomiting
- ❖ Kidney problems
- ❖ Hemorrhage from internal organs and the skin

Seoul virus can affect the kidneys, and in severe cases cause hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome (HFRS).

Symptoms develop within 1-2 weeks, but can take up to 8 weeks after exposure to the virus.

**ALWAYS SUPERVISE  
CHILDREN WITH PET RATS,  
AND BE SURE THEY PROPERLY  
WASH THEIR HANDS**

**MOST INFECTIONS  
WITH SEOUL VIRUS  
ARE MILD OR CAUSE  
NO SYMPTOMS**

## Proper Cleaning Guidelines

### How to clean cages

- ❖ Wear a face mask and disposable rubber or plastic gloves, and if re-using gloves, disinfect after each use.
- ❖ Spray bedding generously with water to eliminate air-borne particles and let soak for 5 minutes
- ❖ Place bedding in a plastic bag for disposal
- ❖ Scrub surface, rinse, dry with paper towels
- ❖ Disinfect all cleaning tools
- ❖ Wash hands with soap and water, dispose of gloves and mask, re-wash hands

### How to clean urine and droppings

- ❖ Do not vacuum or sweep up urine, droppings, or nests
- ❖ Wear disposable rubber or plastic gloves
- ❖ Wear a face mask
- ❖ Place materials in a plastic bag before disposing
- ❖ Spray the area with disinfectant