

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
-
-
- ❖ 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
-
-
- ❖ 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

Proper Cleaning Guidelines

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
-
-

How to clean cages

- ❖ 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
-
-



Health Guidelines Concerning Pet Rat Care



Published: February 2017

Printed by Authority of the State of Illinois
P.O. # 5117366 100 02/23/2017

Types of Infections

Leptospirosis, Lymphocytic Choriomeningitis Virus (LCMV), Rat Bite Fever, and Hantavirus are four rat borne infections. While they are not the only infections one can contract from rats, they are the most common.

How Are the Infections Passed to People?

Infections may be acquired from animal bites, contact with rodent urine, droppings or bedding materials, and breathing in rodent dander, dried droppings and urine, or dust from contaminated bedding materials.

If you are ill enough to consult your doctor, inform them that you own/keep/have handled a rodent

Leptospirosis

Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection which can be carried in wild and pet rodents. Rodents can show no outward signs of infection. People can be infected by direct or indirect contact with infected animal urine, tissues or secretions, or water contaminated with infected animal urine. It can enter the body through cut or damaged skin, membranes, and eyes. Human illness is highly variable. Initial symptoms can include fever, headaches, muscle aches, abdominal pain, jaundice. Severe disease can lead to renal and liver failure, meningitis, and respiratory distress. Symptoms usually develop 7 days after exposure with an incubation range of 2-29 days.

Lymphocytic Choriomeningitis Virus (LCMV)

LCMV is an infection carried by rodents which causes a type of meningitis. The common house mouse and rodents become infected by contact with wild mice. People become infected after exposure to rodent urine, droppings, saliva, or nesting materials through direct contact with broken skin, the nose, the eyes, or the mouth, or via the bite of an infected rodent. Infection without symptoms or as a mild flu-like illness is common, within 6 – 13 days from exposure. Severe disease can lead to meningitis (headaches, fever), encephalitis (drowsiness, confusion, motor or sensory abnormalities), or a combination of both. Infection in pregnancy has been associated with disease in the newborn.

Rat Bite Fever

Rat-bite fever is a rare infection caused by the bacterium *Streptobacillus moniliformis*. The bacteria are found worldwide and are carried in the upper respiratory tract of apparently healthy rodents. People are usually infected in homes or pet shops. Transmission may occur either from a rat bite/scratch when handling infected rats, or from direct contact with their urine. The bite usually heals without signs of infection. Call your doctor if you have been bitten by a rat. Rat-bite fever usually develops within 7 days of the bite, and begins with fever and chills, followed by severe muscle and joint pain, headache and nausea. Many patients develop a rash, most often on the arms and legs.

Hantavirus

Hantaviruses are a group of viruses carried and transmitted by rodents. Hantaviruses have been found in both pet and wild rodents. People usually become infected by breathing in particles contaminated with the virus, such as dust from feces, contaminated bedding, or splashes of urine. People can also get infected if contaminated material comes in direct contact with a cut, open skin, or from a bite of an infected animal. Symptoms can include fever, headache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, kidney injury, respiratory/ pulmonary disease. The time to illness after exposure is 2-4 weeks.