

# HEALTH ADVISORY



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

## **REGION IV PUBLIC HEALTH**

Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum  
counties and Cowlitz Tribe

**TO: Physicians and other Healthcare Providers**

**Please distribute a copy of this information to each provider in your organization.**

Questions regarding this information may be directed to the following Region IV health officers:

**Alan Melnick, MD, MPH, CPH**

Clark County Public Health, (360) 397-8412

Skamania County Community Health, (509) 427-3850

**Jennifer Vines, MD, MPH**

Cowlitz County Health & Human Services, (360) 414-5599

Wahkiakum County Health & Human Services, (360) 795-6207

### **Alert categories:**

**Health Alert:** conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

**Health Advisory:** provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

**Health Update:** provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.

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**Guidance for Local Health Jurisdictions  
Regarding Seoul Virus Identification in Rats  
and Evaluation and Testing of Persons with  
Probable Exposure to Seoul Virus**

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We are sharing this information with providers to encourage testing for Seoul virus, a type of hantavirus, in patients who present with flu-like symptoms and who have had a history of contact with rats. Although no human or rodent cases of Seoul virus have been confirmed in Washington State, if you suspect Seoul virus in a patient, please contact your local health jurisdiction at the phone numbers provided at the end of this advisory.

During December 2016, CDC was notified about a patient in Wisconsin who presented to a hospital earlier that month with flu-like symptoms. Hantavirus infection was suspected because the patient bred and sold Norway rats (*Rattus norvegicus*). A family member of the patient also presented to a health care facility with fever, eye pain, headache, anorexia, diarrhea and coughing. Both persons were confirmed with Seoul hantavirus infection by CDC's Viral Special Pathogens Branch. Since then, multiple states have reported laboratory-confirmed Seoul virus positive results for humans or rats; ratteries are under investigation in a total of 18 states. Updated information is regularly posted on the CDC website:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/hantavirus/outbreaks/seoul-virus/>.

**As of February 22nd, 2017, no human or rodent cases of Seoul virus have been confirmed in Washington State.** Because live rats pose a risk of Seoul virus transmission to people who come into contact with them and the environment (feces, urine, bedding), it is important to maintain awareness of the distribution of Seoul virus-infected rats. Rats do not show symptoms of disease when they are infected with Seoul virus.

**Seoul virus disease in humans:**

- People become infected after exposure to aerosolized urine, droppings, or saliva of infected rodents or after exposure to dust from their nests, for example, when vacuuming or sweeping.
- Transmission may also occur from bites from infected rodents or when infected secretions from rats are directly introduced into broken skin or onto mucous membranes.
- Seoul virus infection is not transmissible human-to-human.
- Incubation is generally 1 to 2 weeks, but in rare cases, up to 8 weeks.
- Initial symptoms often begin suddenly and may include fever, intense headaches, back and abdominal pain, chills, nausea, and blurred vision. Individuals may have flushing of the face, inflammation or redness of the eyes, or a rash.
- Asymptomatic infections can also occur.
- A small percentage of cases will develop a form of hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome (HFRS) with death in approximately 1-2% of cases. Cases that progress to HFRS may exhibit low blood pressure, acute shock, and acute kidney failure.

**Criteria for testing humans:**

- Any person with a history of contact with rats and illness clinically compatible with Seoul virus infection (fever, myalgias, headache, renal failure, conjunctivitis, thrombocytopenia, proteinuria).

- Any person (symptomatic or asymptomatic) with a history of contact with rats from a confirmed or suspect facility during the outbreak period.

**If your patient meets either of these criteria, call your Local Health Jurisdiction to report the suspect case and to arrange testing at the Washington State Public Health Lab.**

**Requests for testing rats:**

If a patient requests testing of one or more pet rats, inquire about the origin of the rats and the date of purchase. A list of states with affected facilities is maintained on the CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/hantavirus/outbreaks/seoul-virus/index.html> If the rat(s) originated from one of the affected states after September 1, 2016, contact your Local Health Jurisdiction at the numbers below for guidance.

**Thank you for your partnership.**

<b>LHJ</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Fax</b>
Clark County Public Health:	(360) 397-8182	(360) 397-8080
Cowlitz County Health Department:	(360) 414-5599	(360) 425-7531
Skamania County Community Health:	(509) 427-3850	(509) 427-0188
Wahkiakum County Health and Human Services:	(360) 795-6207	(360) 795-6143