

Lymphocytic Choriomeningitis Virus (LCMV)

Recently, LCMV caused the death of several organ transplant recipients, where the donor had an infected hamster. This fact sheet contains information about this disease and recommendations to minimize the chances of getting sick from pet rodents.

Key information about LCMV

LCMV is an arenavirus that infects wild rodents, primarily the house mouse.

- Rodents infected with LCMV may or may not show any signs of illness.
- Pet rodents (including mice, hamsters, and guinea pigs) can be infected with LCMV by coming into contact with mice carrying the virus.
- Rare cases of LCMV in people have occurred through contact with infected pet hamsters. Most people exposed to LCMV either do not become sick or have very mild flu-like illness.

Public health concerns regarding LCMV

Human infection can occur through contact with the urine, droppings, saliva, or bedding materials of infected rodents.

- Infection in healthy people usually goes unnoticed or causes flu-like symptoms, including fever, decreased appetite, headache, muscle aches, nausea or vomiting.
- People with compromised immune systems are most at risk of becoming ill with LCMV.
- If infection occurs in a pregnant woman, LCMV can cause birth defects or mental retardation in the baby.
- LCMV is an occupational risk for those working with laboratory rodents.
- Pet rodents can carry other germs that can cause illness.

General recommendations for people who have pet rodents

Pet rodents can carry other pathogenic organisms such as *Salmonella*. Therefore, **wash your hands** with soap and water (or hand-sanitizer, if soap is unavailable) after handling pet rodents or items that may come in contact with pet rodents.

- Because of concerns about LCMV, if you are pregnant or have a weakened immune system, you are discouraged from having pet rodents in your home. If you do, you should keep the rodents in a separate room of the house and have someone else care for them.
- Keep wild rodents out of your home to minimize the risk of LCMV infecting your pet rodent.
- Provide a clean living environment for your pet rodent—supply fresh bedding, food, and water on a regular basis. Clean its cage outdoors or in a well-ventilated area.
- Consult your veterinarian if you have specific questions regarding your pet rodents' health.

This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician or veterinarian for specific information related to you or your animals.

For more information go to:

- **Centers for Disease Control**

www.cdc.gov

- **National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians** www.nasphv.org

For more information go to:

- **Additional information on LCMV**

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/spb/mnpages/dispages/lc_mv.htm

- **Wild rodent control**

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/spb/mnpages/dispages/lc_mv.htm

- **Purchasing a healthy pet rodent**

http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/lcmv_rodents.htm

- **Handling pet rodents**

http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/animals/pocket_pets.htm