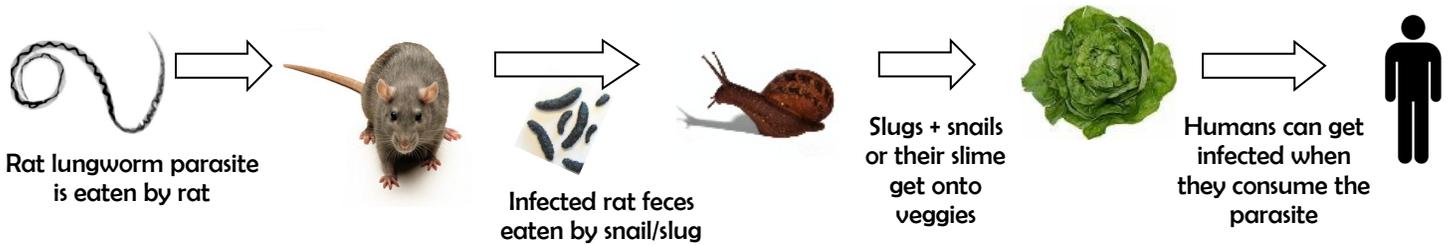


# What is Rat Lungworm Disease?



The rat lungworm is a parasite that can cause rat lungworm disease in humans. The parasite lives in rats, whose feces contains parasites. Snails, slugs, freshwater prawns, crabs and frogs become infected when they eat materials contaminated with rat feces.

Humans can be infected when they eat raw foods contaminated with the parasite. Raw produce, raw or undercooked snails and freshwater prawns can be contaminated by the rat lungworm parasite.

**Human infection is usually mild, but in rare cases, meningitis or coma can occur.**

## Symptoms may include:

- severe headache
- stiffness of the neck and back
- skin tingling, skin sensitivity
- nausea, vomiting
- sensitivity to light, hallucinations

**Some of the slugs + snails that carry the Rat Lungworm Parasite are pictured here:**

Giant African Snail (can reach 8-12 inches in length)



Cuban Slug next to a nickel for comparison



Baby Semi Slug on a nickel (as small as 2 mm long)



Adult Semi Slugs (up to 2.5 cm, or even longer)



## Prevention!

- **Avoid eating raw foods contaminated with slugs, snails, or their slime.**
- **WASH PRODUCE** thoroughly (both conventionally and organically grown).
- **Or COOK PRODUCE** for at least 5 minutes to kill the parasite.
- **Boil freshwater snails, prawns, + crabs for at least 5 minutes.**
- **Do not handle snails and slugs with bare hands. Wash hands after gardening.**
- **Apply slug bait to eliminate slugs from your garden; control rodents near your home.**
- **Cover your catchment tanks to prevent slugs and snails from having access.**

*If you think you may have rat lungworm disease, let your health care provider know of your potential exposures.*

For more information call the Hawai'i State Department of Health, Disease Investigations Branch at 808-984-8213 or [mauiready.org](http://mauiready.org):  
[Mauiready.org/ratlungworm](http://Mauiready.org/ratlungworm)

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