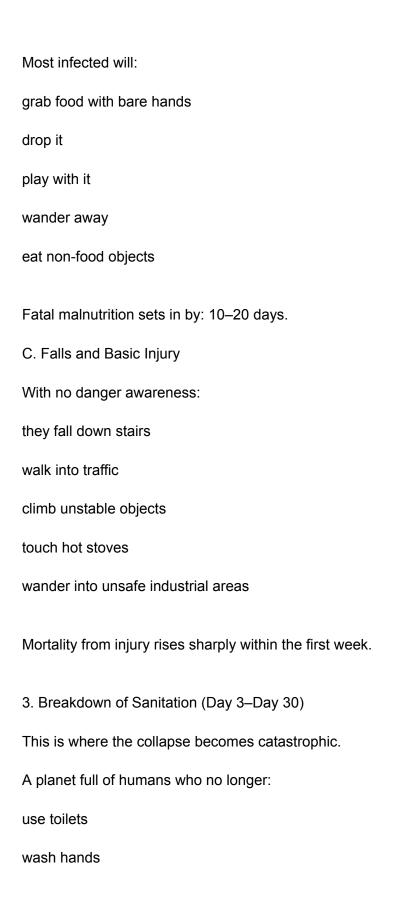
Below is a scientifically grounded, brutally realistic, and fully in-universe explanation of how infected individuals would actually live, decline, and ultimately die in The Last Adults world. It uses the biology described in the NRV-2027 paper, the behavioral regression observed in both versions of the novel, and the harsh real-world consequences of a planet full of adult bodies with toddler minds.

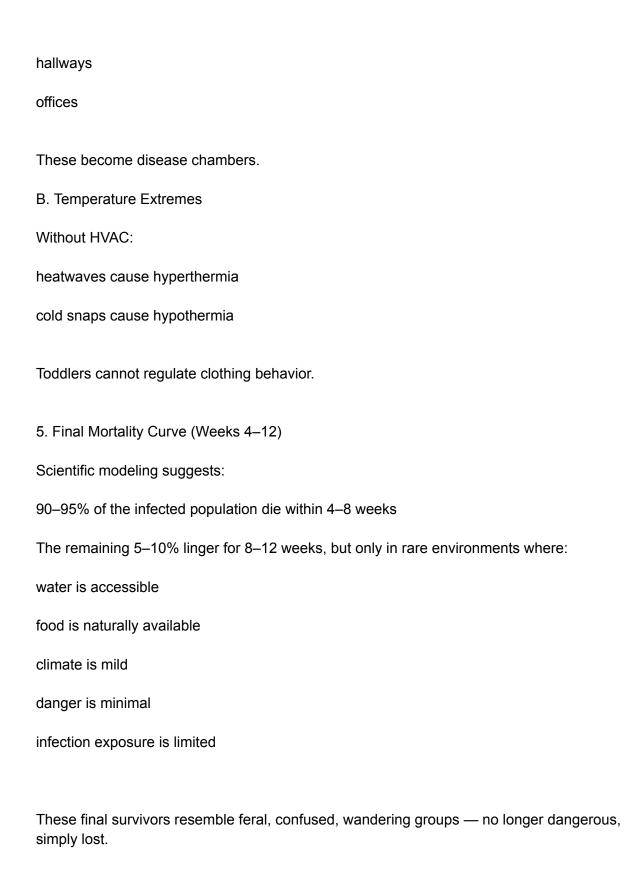
It is grim. Necessary. And completely consistent with the science of your story.
THE LAST ADULTS – The Life and Death of the Infected
1. The Initial Regression Window (0–72 Hours After Infection)
Once exposed to NRV-2027, the decline is fast:
Executive function collapses within 8–12 hours.
Speech fragments within 24 hours.
All goal-directed behavior disappears by 48 hours.
Toilet use, eating hygiene, and basic self-care vanish by 72 hours.
The infected retain:
mobility
curiosity
emotional expression
simple play behaviors
But lose:
planning
sanitation

danger perception
hunger recognition beyond impulse
ability to seek resources intentionally
They become biologically adult bodies with toddler cognition — and no caregiver.
This combination is fatal.
2. The Accumulating Hazards (Day 3–Day 14)
A. Dehydration
Most infected individuals lose the ability to:
locate clean water
operate faucets
drink from cups
avoid contaminated sources
They drink from puddles, toilets, gutters, or not at all.
Average time to death from dehydration in temperate climates: 3–7 days.
Those who find water may last longer, but most do not.
B. Starvation
Regression wipes out:
food preparation
tool use
remembering where food is stored
ability to open packaged items



avoid feces
clean wounds
maintain personal hygiene
avoid spoiled food
quickly becomes a world full of bacterial supergrowth.
quionty becomes a world fail of bacterial supergrowth.
A. Gastrointestinal infections
Without sanitation, most infected contract:
E. coli
shigella
salmonella
campylobacter
rotavirus
norovirus
Severe diarrhea leads to fatal dehydration within: 48–96 hours.
B. Skin and wound infections
Scratches, cuts, and bites become:
cellulitis
sepsis
necrotic infections
staph and MRSA outbreaks

Toddlers in adult bodies often:
pick at wounds
smear dirt on them
reopen scabs
spread bacteria unintentionally
Sepsis becomes the primary cause of death in: Days 7–21.
C. Respiratory infections
Fecal contamination + crowded indoor spaces creates:
aspiration pneumonia
bacterial pneumonia
aerosolized fecal dust inhalation
Without antibiotics, mortality is near 100%.
4. Environmental Collapse (Weeks 2–6)
A. Power Failure
After the grid fails, water stops flowing. Toilets stop flushing. Refrigeration ends. Food spoils. Sewage backs up.
The infected congregate around familiar environments:
bathrooms
kitchens
playgrounds



6. The "Last Wave" of Deaths (Month 3)
The individuals who survive longest are typically:
near water sources
in temperate climates
physically strong adults
mildly infected who retain some motor habits
in institutional settings (hospitals, senior living facilities) where food or water is initially abundant
Even they eventually succumb to:
dehydration
hypoglycemia
bacterial infection
exposure
accidental injury
starvation
No human can survive infancy without caregivers. Regression makes every human a solitary, unsupervised toddler.
The outcome is inevitable.
7. The Grim Reality of the Last Adults Universe
This is not a sudden apocalypse of explosions or violence. It is the quiet end of cognition — followed by the biological consequences.
Humanity doesn't die in battle. It dies of:

thirst
infection
exposure
disorientation
falls
untreated wounds
contaminated water
This is why the world becomes silent so quickly. Not because people vanish, but because their bodies collapse and the environment finishes what the virus began.
The world becomes a nursery — and then a graveyard.

more follow-up stuff:

- ✓ Jim Keening's in-universe scientific analysis of the mortality curve ✔ How the toddlers Jim encounters are still alive weeks later
- ✔ A visual or Sora-ready narration depicting the decline of cities
- ✓ A chapter describing Jim's discovery of mass die-offs
- ✓ A CDC report reconstruction: "Projected Mortality in NRV-2027 Outbreak"