



Hantavirus infection reported on cruise ship in the Atlantic

Update	3
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Summary

On 2 May 2026, a cluster of severe respiratory illness onboard a cruise ship in the Atlantic Ocean was reported to the World Health Organization (WHO).¹ The virus has been identified as Andes virus (ANDV).¹ As of 19 May, a total of 11 cases, including three deaths (case fatality ratio 27%), have been reported by the WHO.² All cases are in people who were on board the cruise ship. Given the incubation period for ANDV, it is not unexpected that additional cases may be reported among exposed individuals.

The WHO continues to assess the risk to the global population from this event as low.³ All six passengers from the cruise ship who have returned to Australia are in quarantine.

CDC situation reassessment plan

- The risk to human health in Australia from hantavirus is very low.
- The Australia CDC will continue to monitor the situation internationally and domestically as repatriated cruise ship passengers undertake their quarantine.

Relevance to Australia

- There are no cases of hantavirus in Australia.
- The WHO continues to assess the risk to the global population from this event as low.³
- In rare cases the ANDV can be transmitted from person to person, usually associated with close and prolonged contact.³
- There is no evidence of transmission from asymptomatic individuals.³

Current situation

Case detection and reporting

- On 2 May, the United Kingdom notified the World Health Organization (WHO) of a cluster of severe respiratory illness board a cruise ship in the Atlantic Ocean.¹
- The vessel departed Ushuaia, Argentina, on 1 April 2026 and followed an itinerary across the South Atlantic, with multiple stops in remote and ecologically diverse regions, including mainland Antarctica, South Georgia, Nightingale Island, Tristan da Cunha, Saint Helena, and Ascension Island.³

- The cause of illness was initially unknown but on the same day as the WHO was notified, laboratory testing confirmed hantavirus infection in a critically ill passenger.³
- Subsequently, the ANDV was identified and characterised. The ANDV is part of the broad Hantavirus group and can be transmitted from person to person, noting that primary transmission route is zoonotic (rodent exposure).³
- The disease associated with this event is Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS), a rare but serious respiratory illness.
- All passengers from the cruise ship have been repatriated and are being monitored during their quarantine period.²
- As of 19 May, a total of 11 cases, including three deaths (case fatality ratio 27%), have been reported by the WHO.² All cases are in individuals who were on board the cruise ship.
- Given the incubation period for ANDV, it is not unexpected that additional cases may be reported among exposed individuals.

Public health response

- The WHO is continuing to manage the hantavirus outbreak response in coordination with affected countries under the International Health Regulations.
- As of 12 May, ANDV is a listed human disease under the [Biosecurity \(Listed Human Diseases\) Determination 2026](#).

Epidemiology

- In Australia there have been no recorded human cases to date.
 - The incubation period for ANDV ranges from 4 to 42 days with a median of 18 days.⁴
 - There is no evidence of transmission from asymptomatic individuals.³
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References

1. World Health Organization (13 May 2026). Disease Outbreak News. Hantavirus cluster linked to cruise ship travel, Multi-country. Accessed 19-05-2026: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/disease-outbreak-news/item/2026-DON601>
2. World Health Organization (19 May 2026). Dr Tedros' address to the #WHA79 delegates. Accessed 19-05-2026: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vsgzPZpTWE>
3. World Health Organization (17 May 2026). Rapid risk assessment, acute event of potential public health concern: Hantavirus outbreak caused by Andes virus, Global v.2. Accessed 19-05-2026: <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/who-rapid-risk-assessment---hantavirus-outbreak-caused-by-andes-virus--global-v.2>
4. US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (9 May 2026). About Andes virus. Accessed 13-05-2026: <https://www.cdc.gov/hantavirus/about/andesvirus.html>