



Situation update

Hantavirus infection reported on cruise ship in the Atlantic

Update 1

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Summary On 2 May 2026, the United Kingdom notified the World Health Organization (WHO) of a cluster of severe respiratory illness board a cruise ship in the Atlantic Ocean. The cause of illness was initially unknown but on the same day, laboratory testing confirmed hantavirus infection in a critically ill passenger. Subsequently, the *Andes* virus was identified and characterised. The *Andes* virus is part of the broad Hantavirus group, whose primary transmission route is zoonotic (rodent exposure). In rare cases the *Andes* virus can be transmitted from person to person. ¹

The WHO currently assesses the risk to the global population from this event as low. The WHO is managing an internationally coordinated response, including evacuations and risk assessment, and currently assesses the risk to the global population from this event as being low. The WHO is developing guidelines ahead of the passengers disembarking the cruise ship in the Canary Islands. The Australian Centre for Disease Control (Australian CDC) is working closely with the WHO and other government agencies to monitor the situation.

CDC situation reassessment plan

- The current risk to human health in Australia is low.
- Continued monitoring of the situation will occur for further cases and information on risk of transmission.

Relevance to Australia

- The current risk to human health in Australia is low.
 - WHO is advising on public health management of the situation on the cruise ship, including plans for disembarkation.
 - The *Andes* virus is part of the broad Hantavirus group, whose primary transmission route is zoonotic (rodent exposure). In rare cases the *Andes* virus can be transmitted from person to person.
 - There is no evidence of asymptomatic transmission of *Andes* virus.
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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.¹
- 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.¹
- Subsequently, the *Andes* virus was identified and characterised. The *Andes* virus is part of the broad Hantavirus group and can be transmitted from person to person, noting that primary transmission is zoonotic (rodent exposure).¹
- The disease associated with this event is Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS), a rare but serious respiratory illness.
- As of 7 May 2026, a total of eight case, including three deaths, have been reported. Of these eight cases, five were laboratory confirmed as hantavirus infections, and some have been sequenced as *Andes* virus species.²

Public health response

- The World Health Organization is managing the public health measures onboard including:
 - Isolation and clinical management of cases
 - Contact tracing of close contacts
 - Environmental investigations (rodent exposure)
 - Infection prevention and control measures
 - Plans for passengers and crew to disembark the cruise ship.
- The Australian CDC is working closely with the WHO, the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, and other government agencies to monitor the situation.

Epidemiology

- In Australia there have been no recorded human cases to date.

Public health guidelines

- The WHO has developed a Hantavirus Outbreak Toolbox which includes guidelines for prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and control: [Hantavirus Outbreak Toolbox](#)

References

1. World Health Organization. Disease Outbreak News: Hantavirus cluster linked to cruise ship travel, Multi-country. Accessed 07-05-2026: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/disease-outbreak-news/item/2026-DON599>
2. World Health Organization. WHO's response to hantavirus cases linked to a cruise ship. Accessed 08-05-2026: <https://www.who.int/news/item/07-05-2026-who-s-response-to-hantavirus-cases-linked-to-a-cruise-ship>