

CDC 2026 Hantavirus Response Key Messages

Issue #2 – May 15, 2026

*Note: Content in this document is cleared and may be used as the basis for external messaging. Messages will be updated on an as-needed basis until further notice. New and updated information will appear in **bold/blue**.*

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Current Situation

- CDC is responding to a deadly [hantavirus](#) outbreak on a cruise ship in the Atlantic Ocean, reported on May 2, 2026.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed that the type of hantavirus responsible for this outbreak is the [Andes virus](#), which can lead to [hantavirus pulmonary syndrome \(HPS\)](#). HPS is a severe and potentially deadly disease that affects the lungs.
- **To date, no confirmed cases of Andes virus have been reported in the United States as a result of this outbreak. The overall risk to travelers and the American public remains extremely low, and routine travel can continue as normal.**
- **A CDC team met the 18 U.S. passengers that were on the ship shortly after they disembarked in the Canary Islands on May 10. CDC staff checked passengers for**

symptoms and interviewed them about their potential exposure(s) before they returned to the United States.

- Those passengers returned to the United States on May 11 aboard a State Department-chartered flight equipped with a biocontainment section.
- Sixteen of the 18 passengers from M/V Hondius were flown directly to a state-of-the-art high-containment facility in Nebraska for assessment and monitoring.
- Two other passengers – one who had symptoms during an initial screening by the CDC team in the Canary Islands, and a travel companion who does not have symptoms -- were flown to Emory University Hospital in Atlanta for assessment and monitoring there.
- On May 15, those passengers were flown to Omaha and rejoined the others from the ship in Nebraska.
- One M/V Hondius passenger had inconclusive hantavirus test results shortly before being safely returned to the United States on the chartered flight. This passenger currently has no symptoms and was isolated and retested in Nebraska.
- In addition, several U.S. passengers disembarked the cruise ship before the outbreak was identified or were present on a flight with a confirmed hantavirus case, and some have returned to the United States on their own.
- CDC has notified state health departments where these passengers live and is actively providing timely updates, resources, and guidance on how to protect these passengers, their families, any of their air travel contacts, and their communities. State health departments are monitoring these returned passengers in coordination with CDC. CDC, in coordination with state and federal partners, identified the Nebraska Biocontainment Unit as an appropriate location for assessing returning cruise passengers and coordinating how and where they will be monitored for a 42-day period.
- Public health officials in the United States and other countries are monitoring passengers and taking precautions to reduce the chance of further spread.
- We might hear about more cases because people who were exposed to the Andes virus are still within the 42-day time period when symptoms can appear. This situation is evolving, and CDC will continue to assess new information and update the public as the need arises.
- For additional information not provided in this document, see <https://www.cdc.gov/hantavirus/situation-summary/index.html> or <https://www.cdc.gov/hantavirus/faq/index.html>.

U.S. Response Actions

- The top priority is keeping these passengers and American communities safe and healthy.
- CDC immediately created health guidance for American passengers on the ship, which was delivered by the U.S. Department of State.
- **From the earliest stages of this incident, CDC has been working in close coordination with state public health authorities, federal partners, international health authorities, and the private sector organizations involved in the response, monitoring, assessments, and repatriation.**
- **CDC's priorities now are**
 - **To continue to help assess each passenger's health status and exposure risk**
 - **Develop and continue to update guidance on monitoring and follow-up**
 - **Support Nebraska and other jurisdictions with laboratory testing capacity, infection prevention and control guidance, and clinical consultation, as needed**
- **CDC is sharing real-time information with state and federal partners to ensure decisions are based on the best available data and evidence.**
- Since the passengers returned, CDC, UNMC, and Emory medical staff have been conducting assessments, speaking with each person about their potential exposures, and sharing information for their 42-day monitoring period.
- CDC and UNMC will work closely with the returning passengers and health departments in their home states to determine the best plan for each person based on their individual and specific situations.
- **CDC also has developed [Interim Guidance for Public Health Assessment and Management of People with Potential Exposure to Andes Virus](#) and made it available on CDC's web site.**
- **CDC has responded to hantavirus outbreaks before, understands how Andes virus spreads, and is coordinating with international partners with similar experience to help ensure best information.**
- **CDC and partners have plans in place for situations like this. These plans help make sure passengers are moved safely, checked for symptoms, monitored after travel, and connected to medical care quickly if they become sick.**
- CDC deployed a team of epidemiologists and medical professionals to the Canary Islands, where they conducted an exposure risk assessment for each American citizen on the ship.
- CDC deployed an additional team to Nebraska for further public health assessment of the American passengers.

- CDC worked with international partners to develop monitoring guidance and resources for state health offices and jurisdictional partners.
- **CDC has offered assistance to clinical providers in diagnosing and testing hantavirus. CDC can test if a person currently has a hantavirus infection or was previously infected with hantavirus.**
- **As part of its contact investigation process, CDC worked with state and local health departments to identify U.S. citizens who were on the M/V Hondius but disembarked the ship early, then returned to the United States. In coordination with CDC, state and local health departments are monitoring the health of these passengers who have returned to their jurisdiction, as well as any of their air travel contacts.**

Information for the American Public

- **The risk to the American public remains extremely low. Andes virus does not spread easily from person to person. When person-to-person spread occurs, it is usually limited to close contact with someone who has symptoms.**
- Current assessments show no indication of increased risk for people who are traveling, and routine travel can continue as normal.
- **This outbreak is not like COVID-19. Andes virus is not a respiratory virus that spreads easily through casual contact or routine travel.**
- **Hantavirus is not new to CDC. CDC has monitored hantaviruses that naturally occur in the United States for decades and has experience supporting health departments, clinicians, and communities with their hantavirus surveillance.**
- **CDC and partners are using established response plans to help make sure passengers from the M/V Hondius and any air travel contacts are checked for symptoms, monitored after travel, and connected to medical care quickly if they become sick.**
- **CDC is keeping health departments, clinicians, affected travelers, and the public informed through updated guidance, FAQs, clinician alerts, web updates, and other public health resources.**
- **People who were not on the M/V Hondius cruise ship, on one of the identified commercial flights, or in close contact with someone who was sick with Andes virus do not need to take special precautions related to this outbreak.**
- **If you had close contact with someone who was on the M/V Hondius cruise ship and later became sick, or if you develop symptoms after a possible exposure, contact a healthcare provider or your state or local health department right away.**

Information for Public Health Departments

- CDC has [published guidance and case reporting information](#) for public health departments about the management of passengers returning from this cruise ship and other people who were in close contact with someone who was sick with Andes virus.
- The risk to the U.S. public remains extremely low.
- **CDC recommends individual exposure risk assessments for all potentially exposed people.**
- Andes virus is the only type of hantavirus that transmits person-to-person. Symptoms may appear between 4 and 42 days after exposure to the virus, but about half will have symptoms within 18 days.
- People are generally only infectious while they have symptoms.
- Andes virus is not easily spread from person to person. Transmission requires prolonged close contact with a sick person.
- There are no specific treatments available for hantavirus, so rapid access to advanced supportive care is critical.
- **Anyone aboard the M/V Hondius at any time from April 6, when the first patient in this outbreak fell ill, through the date of disembarkation of the exposed passengers is considered at high risk for Andes virus because they had prolonged close contact with passengers and crew and shared living spaces.**
- **Anyone who flew on an aircraft with a person sick with Andes virus and [sat in proximity](#) of them is also considered to be at high risk. State and local health departments are monitoring the health of these contacts in coordination with CDC.**
- **In consultation with public health authorities, people identified as being at high risk for Andes virus may have the option of being monitored at home or being monitored in a facility. This may be at the National Quarantine Unit in Nebraska or a location identified by a health department in their home state or city, in coordination with the person being monitored.**
- **The decision for whether the person will stay at home will be based in part on whether they can isolate themselves in the home if symptoms develop and have a nearby hospital capable of treating hantavirus if their symptoms get worse. CDC's [Interim Guidance for Public Health Assessment and Management of People with Potential Exposure to Andes Virus](#) will help passengers and health departments make these decisions.**
- **Health departments should monitor high-risk contacts twice a day until 42 days after the last known high-risk exposure.**

- CDC's Viral Special Pathogens Branch (VSPB) is available for consultation or diagnostic testing by calling the CDC Emergency Operations Center at 770-488-7100 and requesting VSPB's on-call epidemiologist. VSPB cannot accept specimens without prior consultation.
- **During these 42 days, high-risk contacts should also modify their activities and take certain precautions to protect their household members and communities as follows.**

General precautions for high-risk contacts

- **Practice good hand hygiene**
- **Ensure good ventilation**
- **Wear a well-fitting respirator or mask that covers the mouth and nose, if indoors with others**
- **Maintain distance**
 - **Avoid kissing, hugging, or other intimate contact**
 - **Avoid sharing a bedroom with anyone**
- **Avoid exposing others to bodily fluids**
 - **Avoid sharing items that may be contaminated, such as toothbrushes, cigarettes/vapes/hookah, or unwashed towels, bedding, or clothing.**
 - **Avoid sharing food out of the same plate or bowl, eating from the same utensil, or sharing beverages**
- **Delay nonessential medical or dental appointments**
 - **Coordinate any urgent or necessary care with the health department in advance and notify the healthcare facility before arrival**

Travel and Movement Restrictions

- **Stay home and away from others**
 - **This means, unless it is a life-threatening emergency or they are instructed by public health authorities:**
 - **They should not enter any buildings except their residence**
 - **They should not allow other people to enter their residence.**
 - **If someone else must enter the home, for example to conduct necessary repairs, they should contact their health department for instructions.**
 - **If they typically reside with other people, the most protective option is to reside apart during their quarantine period.**
 - **They may spend time outdoors within walking distance of their residence.**

- They should maintain distance from other people and avoid crowded settings (including outdoors).
- If it is a life-threatening emergency, they should:
 - First, call 911 and tell the dispatcher right away that they have been exposed to Hantavirus so responders can take proper precautions.
 - Then, they should call their health department emergency contact.
- Any essential travel -- for example, to return to their communities or to get urgent medical care -- should be coordinated by authorities.

About Hantavirus

- Hantaviruses are a family of viruses which can cause serious illnesses and death.
- People usually get [hantavirus](#) from contact with rodents, especially when exposed to their urine, droppings, and saliva.
- Hantaviruses can also spread through a bite or scratch by a rodent, but this is rare.
- New World Hantaviruses found in the Western Hemisphere, including here in the United States, can cause hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS). HPS is a severe and potentially deadly disease that affects the lungs.
- WHO has confirmed that the type of hantavirus responsible for this outbreak is the Andes virus.

About Andes virus

- Andes virus is a type of hantavirus spread by rodents in South America.
- Andes virus primarily spreads to humans through contact with long-tailed rice rats which are found throughout much of Argentina and Chile.
- The Andes virus is the only type of hantavirus that is known to spread person-to-person. This spread is usually limited to people who have prolonged close contact with the ill person.
- This includes direct physical contact, prolonged time spent in close or enclosed spaces, and exposure to the infected person's saliva, respiratory secretions, or other body fluids (e.g., kissing, sharing utensils, handling contaminated bedding).
- Like other hantavirus infections, Andes virus infection can lead to a severe respiratory disease called Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS)
- **It is different than the hantaviruses found in the United States, which are not known to spread person-to-person.**
- **Cases of hantavirus that naturally occur in the United States are reported every year. To learn more about hantaviruses in the United States, visit [Reported Cases of Hantavirus Disease](#).**

Symptoms

- HPS is a severe and potentially fatal respiratory disease. For infections caused by Andes virus, symptoms typically develop 4–42 days after exposure, **though most people who develop infection will get sick within the first 21 days.**
- People are generally able to spread the virus only while they have symptoms.
- Early symptoms commonly include fatigue, fever, and muscle aches, particularly in large muscle groups such as the thighs, hips, back, and shoulders. About half of patients also experience headaches, dizziness, chills, and gastrointestinal symptoms including nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain.
- Approximately 4–10 days after the initial illness, patients may develop worsening respiratory symptoms, including cough and shortness of breath, as fluid accumulates in the lungs. HPS can be life-threatening; among patients who develop severe respiratory symptoms, the case fatality rate is estimated at approximately 38%.

Testing

- CDC can test whether a person currently has a hantavirus infection or was previously infected with hantavirus.
- **Tests look for the presence of two types of antibodies, known as IgM and IgG.**
- **Once CDC receives a sample, results should be available in about 24 hours.**
- **CDC recommends testing people who:**
 - **currently have symptoms of New World hantavirus and have a known exposure**
 - **had symptoms while they were a passenger on the M/V Hondius or on an aircraft.**
- **CDC does not recommend clinical testing of people who have not experienced symptoms of hantavirus infection. This is because the New World hantavirus test can potentially be negative when you test someone before they show symptoms.**
 - **A false negative can give false reassurance and delay public health interventions.**
 - **Even if someone with symptoms tests negative for hantavirus and their test was done fewer than 72 hours from when their symptoms started, they need to be re-tested when they've been sick more than 72 hours to confirm the result is negative.**
- **The repatriated American passengers continue to be assessed at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, National Quarantine Center in Nebraska. Any passengers with current or resolved hantavirus symptoms will be clinically tested. The testing will be done at CDC in Atlanta.**

- CDC has offered assistance to clinical providers in diagnosing and testing hantavirus.
- In addition to having a validated blood test specifically for Andes virus, CDC is working to fully validate a PCR test for clinical use.
- In addition to CDC, several state laboratories and Quest Diagnostics perform serologic testing for the detection of New World hantavirus IgM and IgG antibodies.
- Early diagnosis of HPS can be difficult, especially within the first 72 hours of symptoms, before the virus can be accurately detected in body secretions and excretions. Repeat diagnostic testing is often done 72 hours after symptom onset. CLIA assays for detection of New World hantavirus IgM and IgG antibodies are available at CDC and some state public health laboratories.
- If you have any questions or concerns regarding submitting a specimen or any public health emergency, please contact your [state or local health department](#) or contact the CDC's Emergency Operations Center at 770-488-7100.

Treatment

- There is no specific treatment for hantavirus infection. Patients should receive supportive care, including rest, hydration, and treatment of symptoms.
- Symptoms may develop rapidly. Early medical care is critical.
- Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS) can cause breathing difficulties, and patients may need breathing support, such as intubation. Intubation is a medical procedure where a tube is placed in the lungs from the mouth to help the patient get oxygen.

Resources

- [About Andes Virus](#)
- HAN: [2026 Multi-country Hantavirus Cluster Linked to Cruise Ship](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Public Health Assessment and Management of People with Potential Exposure to Andes Virus](#)
- [Clinical Overview of Hantavirus](#)
- [Clinician Brief: Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome \(HPS\)](#)
- [Hantavirus Case Definition and Reporting](#)