



Media Disclaimer: *The Pennsylvania Health Alert Network (PA-HAN) provides timely information on emerging public health issues to state and local public health agencies, hospitals, emergency management officials, and other health care providers.*

These messages are intended to inform and support clinical work and should not be treated as news releases. If members of the media have questions about a PA-HAN, contact the DOH Office of Communications at ra-dhpressoffice@pa.gov.

DATE:	5/12/2026
TO:	Health Alert Network
FROM:	Debra L. Bogen, MD, FAAP, Secretary of Health
SUBJECT:	2026 Multi-country Hantavirus Cluster Linked to Cruise Ship
DISTRIBUTION:	Statewide
LOCATION:	Statewide
STREET ADDRESS:	n/a
COUNTY:	n/a
MUNICIPALITY:	n/a
ZIP CODE:	n/a

This transmission is a “Health Advisory”: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

HOSPITALS: PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, PEDIATRIC, NURSING AND LABORATORY STAFF IN YOUR HOSPITAL; **EMS COUNCILS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **FQHCs:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP; **LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES:** PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, INFECTION CONTROL AND NURSING STAFF IN YOUR FACILITY.

Situation Summary

- On May 2, 2026, the World Health Organization (WHO) was notified of a cluster of severe acute respiratory illness (SARI) among passengers and crew of a cruise ship in the Atlantic Ocean.
- The cluster included two deaths and one critically ill passenger whose laboratory tests confirmed hantavirus.
- On May 6, 2026, WHO confirmed that the type of hantavirus responsible for this outbreak is the Andes virus.
- As of May 11, 2026, WHO has reported nine cases (seven confirmed and two suspected), including three deaths. Investigations are ongoing to assess exposure risk of all Americans passengers on the cruise ship or who may have been exposed to an infected cruise ship passenger on an aircraft.
- **The Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) has not been notified of any Pennsylvania residents that were on board the cruise ship linked to the Hantavirus outbreak.**
- Providers must **immediately report suspected hantavirus** cases to local public health authorities or to DOH at 877-PA-HEALTH (877-724-3258).

Background

DOH is releasing the following health alert network message from the Centers for Disease Control of Prevention (CDC). **As noted above, DOH has not been notified of any Pennsylvania residents that were on board the cruise ship linked to the Hantavirus outbreak.**

On May 2, 2026, WHO was notified of a cluster of SARI among passengers and crew of a cruise ship in the Atlantic Ocean. The cluster included two deaths and one critically ill passenger whose laboratory tests confirmed hantavirus. On May 6, 2026, WHO confirmed that the type of hantavirus responsible for this outbreak is the Andes virus. As of May 11, 2026, WHO has reported nine cases (seven confirmed and two suspected), including three deaths. Investigations are ongoing to assess exposure risk of all Americans passengers on the cruise ship or who may have been exposed to an infected cruise ship passenger on an aircraft.

The cruise ship departed from Ushuaia, Argentina, on April 1, 2026, and traveled across the South Atlantic Ocean, stopping at several remote locations, including Antarctica, South Georgia Island, Tristan da Cunha, Saint Helena, and Ascension Island. It carried 147 people (86 passengers and 61 crew) from 23 different countries. The extent of their contact with wildlife before or during the expedition is unknown.

CDC is working with partners (federal government, state and local and international) on safely repatriating American passengers from the cruise ship to a facility in Nebraska with specialized medical capabilities. On May 7, 2026, CDC sent a team to meet the cruise ship in the Canary Islands, Spain following travel from Cape Verde. The team is prepared to assess exposure risk among U.S. passengers and determine appropriate monitoring measures.

CDC is also coordinating with international partners to align public health guidance and has already issued health guidance to affected Americans via the State Department. **The risk to the public's health in the United States is considered extremely low at this time.** As a precaution, CDC is working to increase awareness of the outbreak among travelers, public health agencies, laboratories, and health care professionals nationwide.

Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome

Hantaviruses are a group of viruses that can cause severe illness and death. They are most commonly transmitted (spread) to humans through contact with infected rodents (e.g., urine, droppings, saliva). Rarely, infection can occur from rodent bites or scratches. From 1993 through 2023, a total of 890 laboratory-confirmed [cases of hantavirus were reported in the United States](#).

In the Americas, hantaviruses can cause hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS), a severe and potentially deadly disease that affects the lungs. HPS can be life-threatening. Among reported patients who have severe respiratory symptoms, the case fatality rate has been estimated at approximately 38%.

Andes virus, confirmed as the cause of this hantavirus outbreak, is the only type of hantavirus that has been documented to spread from person to person. Although rare, spread between people has typically required close, prolonged contact with a symptomatic person. This could include 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).

Symptoms of HPS caused by Andes virus usually appear within 4-42 days after exposure. Early symptoms can include fever, fatigue, and muscle aches, especially in large muscle groups like the thighs, hips, back, or shoulders. Early symptoms such as fever, headache, muscle aches, nausea, and fatigue can be easily confused with influenza or other viral illnesses. About half of all HPS patients have experienced headaches, dizziness, chills, and gastrointestinal symptoms, including nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain. Late symptoms of HPS appear approximately 4-10 days after the initial

phase of illness and can include coughing, shortness of breath, and chest tightness. Individuals are generally only infectious while symptomatic.

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, some state public health laboratories, and Quest Diagnostics.

For questions or concerns about submitting a specimen, please call your local health department or DOH at 877-PA-HEALTH (877-724- 3258).

No specific treatment is recommended for hantavirus infection; early supportive care is critical even before the diagnosis is confirmed. Patients with suspected HPS can deteriorate rapidly, and delayed care reduces the chance of survival. In severe cases, extra-corporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) can significantly improve survival (up to ~80%) if started early. Usually, the critical phase of disease is fairly short, and survivors can recover quickly.

Recommendations for Health Care Providers

- Be prepared to follow CDC's guidance under [Appendix A: Type and Duration of Precautions Recommended for Selected Infections and Conditions | Infection Control | CDC](#).
 - In health care settings, for patients with suspected or confirmed Andes virus infection, CDC recommends patient placement in an airborne infection isolation room and the use of a gown, gloves, eye protection, and an N95 or higher-level respirator when entering the patient's room.
- Include HPS in the differential diagnosis for an ill person who has compatible symptoms AND who has reported epidemiological risk factors, including at least one of the following, within the 42 days before symptoms onset:
 - Had direct physical contact, or spent time in close or enclosed spaces, with a symptomatic person with confirmed or suspected Andes virus infection or with any objects contaminated by their body fluids.
 - Had exposure to an infected person's saliva, respiratory secretions, or other body fluids (e.g., kissing, sharing utensils, handling contaminated bedding).
 - Experienced a breach in infection prevention and control precautions that resulted in potential contact with body fluids of a patient with suspected or confirmed Andes virus infection.
- Consider and perform diagnostic testing for more common illnesses as well, such as [COVID-19](#), [influenza](#), and other common causes of gastrointestinal and febrile illnesses in an acutely ill patient with epidemiological risk factors and compatible symptoms.

For More Information

General Resources

- [About Hantavirus | CDC](#)
- [About Andes Virus | CDC](#)
- [Reported Cases of Hantavirus Disease | CDC](#)
- [Hantavirus Prevention | CDC](#)

Clinician Resources

- [Clinical Overview of Hantavirus | CDC](#)
- [Clinician Brief: Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome \(HPS\) | CDC](#)
- [Clinician Brief: Hemorrhagic Fever with Renal Syndrome | CDC](#)
- [Hantavirus Disease Trainings for Healthcare Providers | CDC](#)
- [Appendix A: Type and Duration of Precautions Recommended for Selected Infections and Conditions | Infection Control | CDC](#)

Health Department Resources

- [Hantavirus Case Definition and Reporting | CDC](#)

References

1. World Health Organization (WHO). Disease Outbreak News: Hantavirus cluster linked to cruise ship travel, Multi-country. May 8, 2026. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/disease-outbreak-news/item/2026-DON599>
2. Complete sequence of Orthohantavirus andesense virus: Swiss resident 2026. May 7, 2026. <https://virological.org/t/complete-sequence-of-orthohantavirus-andesense-virus-swiss-resident-2026/1023>
3. World Health Organization (WHO). Disease Outbreak News: Hantavirus cluster linked to cruise ship travel, Multi-country. May 4, 2026. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/disease-outbreak-news/item/2026-DON599>
4. Martínez VP, Valeria, Di Paola N, Alonso DO, et al. "Super-Spreaders" and Person-to-Person Transmission of Andes Virus in Argentina. *New England Journal of Medicine*. 383. 2230-2241. 10.1056/NEJMoa2009040. 2020; 383(23):2230-2241. <https://doi.org/10.1056/nejmoa2009040>. PMID:[33264545](#).

For questions, please call your local health department or DOH at 877-PA-HEALTH (877-724-3258).

DOH reminds providers to immediately report suspected cases of hantavirus to local public health authorities or to DOH at 877-PA-HEALTH (877-724-3258).

Individuals interested in receiving future PA-HANs can register [here](#).

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

This information is current as of May 12, 2026, but may be modified in the future.