

Hantavirus

11 May 2026

Several people infected with Hantavirus, linked to the cruise ship *MV Hondius*, are being cared for in multiple countries.

The ship departed Ushuaia, Argentina, on 1 April for a South Atlantic voyage which included stops at Antarctica, South Georgia, Nightingale Island, Tristan da Cunha, Gough Island, and Saint Helena. After the cluster of cases was identified, the ship anchored off Cape Verde, where three passengers were medically evacuated to the Netherlands.

The first fatality occurred on 11 April. Hantavirus was first confirmed on 2 May after a sick passenger was evacuated to South Africa and tested there. Before the outbreak was suspected, 1 passenger disembarked at Tristan da Cunha and 32 passengers at St Helena. Contact tracing of passengers who disembarked is ongoing. Passengers on the same flight as a confirmed case from St Helena to South Africa have also been contacted.

Approximately 150 passengers and crew were on board when the ship arrived at the port of Granadilla, Tenerife, on 10 May. Disembarkation of passengers and some crew commenced, with repatriation to their home countries on specialised transport for further assessment and monitoring.

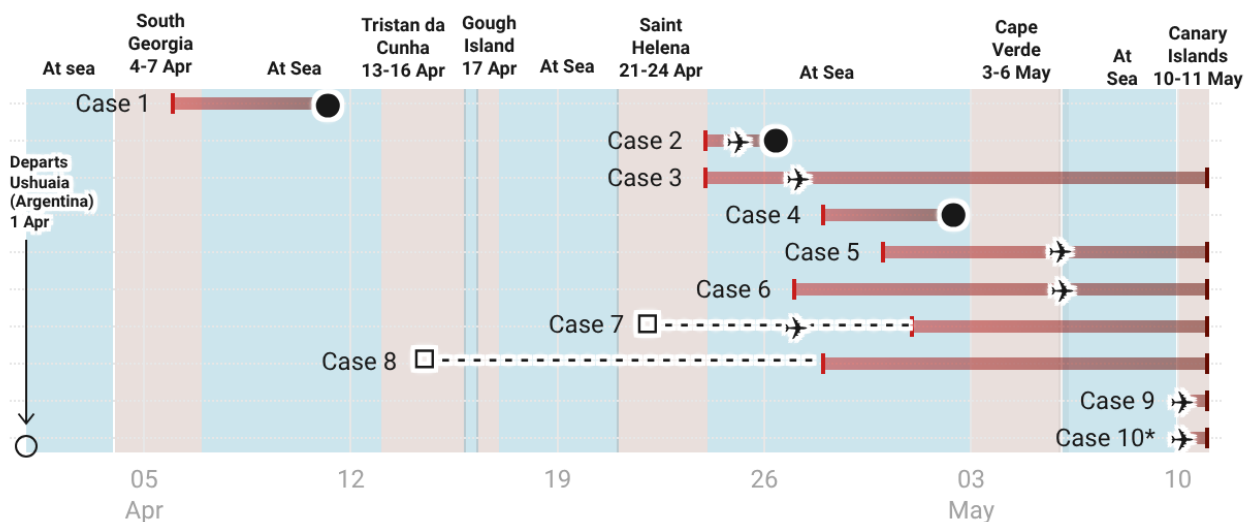
Since disembarkation, one additional confirmed case and an inconclusive case undergoing additional testing have been reported among repatriated passengers (a French national and a US national). An additional US national has also developed symptoms and is under investigation.

Once disembarkation is complete, the remaining 32 crew members will sail to the Netherlands, where they will disembark, and the ship will undergo disinfection.

As of 11 May, a total of 10 cases (7 confirmed, 2 probable, 1 inconclusive) have been reported in this outbreak. For the latest updates, see the [Pandemic Preparedness website](#).

Timeline of cases

- ✈ Date of flight or medical evacuation
- Date of ship disembarkation
- Date of death



Symptom onset for each case is reflected by the beginning of the red bars. Cases 3 (South Africa), 5 and 6 (Netherlands), 7 (Switzerland), 8 (Tristan da Cunha), 9 (France) and 10 (United States) remain in isolation receiving care. *Case 10 is currently classified as inconclusive.

This timeline is compiled from multiple official sources and is provided for informational purposes. Information is subject to change as new information becomes available.

Chart: Medical Information & Analysis, International SOS • Created with Datawrapper

Epidemiological investigations and additional laboratory testing are ongoing to understand how individuals were infected. Based on currently available information, the working hypothesis is that the first case most probably acquired the infection prior to boarding the cruise ship. He and his wife had travelled extensively in Argentina and Chile in the months prior to boarding *MV Hondius*. The assumption is that human-to-human transmission likely occurred on board the cruise ship.

International SOS is monitoring the situation closely.

For the latest updates, see:

- The [Medical Alerts](#) on the Argentina, Cape Verde, France, Netherlands, Spain, South Africa, Switzerland and the United States pages of International SOS location guides.
- The [Hantavirus page](#) of the Pandemic Preparedness website.

What are hantaviruses?

Hantaviruses are a group of viruses in the *Bunyaviridae* family carried by rodents. The virus circulates in the Americas, Asia and Europe. They can cause two different types of illness in humans: Haemorrhagic fever with renal failure syndrome (HFRS), which is found in Europe and Asia and hantavirus cardiopulmonary syndrome (HCPS), which primarily affects the respiratory system. Hantaviruses in the Americas cause HCPS. While most people infected with hantaviruses are exposed to excretions from infected rodents, human-to-human transmission has been documented with the *Andes* virus in South America.

How do people become infected?

People become infected with hantavirus primarily through contact with infected rodents or their urine, faeces or saliva. Infection most commonly occurs by inhaling air that contains tiny particles (aerosols) contaminated with infected rodents' excretions. The virus may also enter the body through direct contact of broken skin or mucous membranes with contaminated urine or other excretions. Rarely, human infection may occur through the bite of an infected rodent.

Human-to-human transmission has been documented with the *Andes* virus after close contact.

How soon after exposure to the virus does a person show symptoms?

Limited data suggest that people become sick within 1 to 8 weeks after exposure to the virus.

What are the symptoms?

Andes virus causes hantavirus cardiopulmonary syndrome (HCPS).

Initial symptoms include fatigue, fever, headache, muscle aches and gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal pain). Symptoms progress about four to ten days after the onset of symptoms and include cough, shortness of breath, and build-up of fluid in the lungs.

Can hantavirus be fatal?

Yes. The case fatality rate for HCPS is between 20 and 40%.

How is hantavirus diagnosed?

As symptoms of hantavirus infections can resemble the flu and other respiratory illnesses it is often difficult to diagnose until later stages of illness. A detailed history, including potential exposure to rodents, will help determine if there has been exposure to hantavirus.

The diagnosis is confirmed by a blood and PCR tests.

What is the treatment for hantavirus?

There is no specific treatment or cure for hantavirus. Patients are treated supportively, meaning treatment focuses on symptom relief. Patients usually require hospitalisation and treatment in an intensive care unit.

It is important to seek treatment early, as it is more difficult to treat patients once their symptoms have become more severe.

Who is at risk?

The *Andes* virus circulates in Argentina and Chile. Anyone can be exposed to hantavirus, but some activities increase the risk of infection, including:

- Cleaning enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces
- Farming and forestry work
- Sleeping in rodent-infested dwellings
- Construction, utility and pest control jobs
- Camping and hiking

Is there a vaccine?

There is no vaccine available for *Andes* virus.

What preventative measures can be taken against hantavirus?

The best way to avoid infection is to eliminate rodents from living spaces and work environments and avoid contact with them.

- Avoid direct contact with rodents, their faeces, saliva, urine, or nests.
- Pay attention to general hygiene and food storage.
- Always wash your hands thoroughly before eating or touching your face.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- In rodent-infested areas, avoid activities that stir up dust such as sweeping or vacuuming.
- Wear gloves and wet contaminated areas with a disinfectant or bleach solution (1 cup bleach to 10 parts water) before wiping or mopping.

After being exposed, what should people do?

People who believe they may have been exposed should monitor their health closely and seek medical advice if they develop symptoms. Early diagnosis and treatment can improve outcomes.

In the current outbreak, what is being done to prevent additional infections?

Health authorities from Cape Verde, the Netherlands, Spain, South Africa, the United Kingdom and other islands are working together to implement public health measures to prevent further infections, including information sharing and contact tracing, with support from the World Health Organization (WHO). Passengers have been advised to minimise contact with others and follow prevention guidance. Epidemiological investigations and additional laboratory testing are ongoing.

What is the risk to travellers from this current outbreak?

The risk to travellers is currently considered low, as hantavirus is primarily transmitted through exposure to infected rodents rather than between people.

The WHO has assessed the risk to the global population as low.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control has assessed the risk to the general population in the European Union and European Economic Area (EU/EEA) from this outbreak as very low.

What is the general risk to travellers?

For most travellers, the overall risk of hantavirus infection is low and is primarily linked to being in environments where rodents live or have left urine, droppings, or nests (e.g., cabins, sheds, barns, grain storage areas, campsites, or poorly ventilated enclosed spaces). HCPS is caused by “New World” hantaviruses, which are found in Canada, the United States, and countries in South America, including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Panama, Paraguay, and Uruguay. The *Andes* virus, found in Argentina and Chile, is the only hantavirus reported to spread from person to person.

Reference

International SOS – Location Guides <http://www.internationalsos.com>

Further information

[WHO Hantavirus fact sheet](#)

[CDC Hantavirus information](#)

Disclaimer

This information has been developed for educational purposes only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice. Should you have questions or concerns about any topic described here, please consult your healthcare professional.