



Multi-Country Hantavirus Cluster Associated with Cruise Ship Travel

Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) is closely monitoring reports of a multi-country cluster of hantavirus infections identified among individuals with recent histories of international cruise ship travel.

On 2 May 2026, a cluster of passengers with severe respiratory illness aboard a cruise ship was reported. The ship is carrying 147 passengers and crew. As of 4 May 2026, seven cases (two laboratory confirmed cases of hantavirus and five suspected cases) have been identified, including three deaths, one critically ill patient and three individuals reporting mild symptoms. Illness onset occurred between 6 and 28 April 2026 and was characterized by fever, gastrointestinal symptoms, rapid progression to pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome and shock. Further investigations are ongoing. The outbreak is being managed through coordinated international response, and includes in-depth investigations, case isolation and care, medical evacuation and laboratory investigations.

Authorities from States Parties involved in the management of the event to date – Cabo Verde, the Netherlands, Spain, South Africa and the United Kingdom - have initiated coordinated response.

Preliminary epidemiological investigations suggest a potential link between exposure during maritime travel and subsequent illness in several affected countries.

Hantaviruses are primarily transmitted to humans through contact with infected rodent excreta,

saliva, or urine, and are not typically associated with sustained human-to-human transmission. However, the clustering of cases in travelers sharing confined environments warrants heightened vigilance and further investigation to determine the source and mode of exposure.

Africa CDC is working in coordination with national public health authorities to:

- Strengthen surveillance and case detection across Member States.
- Support laboratory confirmation and genomic analysis of suspected cases.
- Facilitate information sharing regarding travel histories and potential exposure sites.
- Assess environmental and sanitation conditions aboard implicated vessels.

At this time, there is no evidence of widespread community transmission within African countries. The risk to the general public remains low. Nonetheless, Africa CDC advises Member States to enhance port health services, reinforce infection prevention and control measures, and ensure timely reporting of suspected cases.

Travelers are encouraged to practice good hygiene, avoid contact with rodents or potentially contaminated environments, and seek medical attention if they develop symptoms such as fever, fatigue, muscle aches, or respiratory difficulty following travel.

Africa CDC will continue to provide updates as more information becomes available.

Hantavirus characteristics:

Fever, gastrointestinal symptoms, rapid progression to pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome and shock.