

Update to Healthcare Professionals on Evolving Hantavirus Situation

Update to York Region health care professionals as of May 8, 2026

Dear Colleagues,

You may be seeing media reports regarding a cluster of hantavirus cases associated with a cruise ship in international waters. We wanted to provide a brief update on the situation, along with reassurance that the current risk to York Region remains **very low**.

Below is a summary of what is known to date, key clinical considerations, and actions underway provincially and locally.

Situational Update:

- On May 2, 2026, the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) confirmed an outbreak of hantavirus (Andes strain) linked to a cruise ship that departed Argentina on April 1, 2026, and is expected to dock in the Canary Islands in the coming days
- As of May 6, 2026, **nine cases** (five confirmed, four suspected) have been reported, including three deaths and one individual who is critically ill
- Ten Canadians were on board:
 - Two Ontario residents have since returned home and are being monitored by their local public health unit (Grey Bruce) in collaboration with the Ontario Ministry of Health. Both remain asymptomatic
 - Four individuals remain on the ship, and are believed to be residents of other provinces
- There are **no known contacts or cases in York Region** at this time

Hantavirus: Epidemiology and Clinical Background

- Hantaviruses are a group of viruses carried by rodents. While these viruses are found around the world, only a few of them cause illness in humans
- Hantavirus is extremely rare in Canada: no cases of hantavirus have been reported in York Region since 2015, and there have been no cases in Ontario since 2017
- Clinical illness falls into two main types: Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS) is the main clinical presentation of hantavirus strains in the Americas and Hemorrhagic Fever with Renal Syndrome (HFRS) is the classic clinical presentation of strains that occur in Europe and Asia
- HPS is a rare disease that often starts with flu-like symptoms, such as
 - Fever
 - Headache
 - Myalgias
 - Dizziness
 - Nausea
 - Gastrointestinal symptoms



- The incubation period (time from exposure till symptom onset) can be up to six weeks post exposure (with an average of two weeks)
- Most common sources of transmission include contact with infected urine, saliva or droppings of rodents
- Although uncommon, limited human-to-human transmission of HPS due to Andes virus has been reported with **close and prolonged contact**. It has been confirmed that the Andes strain is responsible for the outbreak on the ship. Note that the Andes strain is endemic in South America, and Argentina has reported an increase in cases in 2025-2026 (with 42 cases in 2026)

Next Steps:

York Region Public Health is closely monitoring the situation with our provincial and federal colleagues. An Ontario Health memo will be circulated shortly with more information.

For your awareness, any contacts who become symptomatic are to be assessed and treated at Toronto Western Hospital. Although the likelihood is extremely low, should you become aware of any symptomatic known contact, please call York Region Public Health immediately to facilitate transfer to Toronto Western Hospital, where appropriate IPAC precautions, assessment and testing will be initiated.

There are no other screening requirements or recommendations for the general public currently.

Contact Us

If you have any additional questions on hantavirus, please call our Control of Infectious Diseases intake line at 1-877-464-9674, ext. 73588 (Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.).

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