

MLS Laboratory Update: Andes Hantavirus Disease Outbreak

MAY 13TH, 2026

Purpose of this Message:

To inform the MLS community about the status of the current hantavirus outbreak and provide information about testing options.

Action Item:

- Please forward to relevant staff throughout your health system for situational awareness as appropriate.
- No changes in clinical or laboratory practices are recommended at this time.

Background:

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), in coordination with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO), is monitoring an outbreak of illness caused by Andes virus, a known species of hantavirus, among passengers and crew of the MV *Hondius* cruise ship.

- **We want to emphasize that the risk to the public remains very low.**
 - Hantaviruses are usually transmitted by exposure to droppings, urine and saliva of particular rodents.
 - Andes virus is transmitted through exposure to particular rodents in South America and it is the only hantavirus known to be transmitted between people, although it is not readily transmitted between people. Person-to-person spread is usually limited to people who have close contact with an infected person with symptoms, such as household members or intimate partners, and it is most likely to occur early after symptoms begin.
- MDH has not been notified of any Minnesotans that were on board this ship.
- MDH is currently monitoring one person who was not on the ship but may have been exposed overseas to someone who had been on board the ship and later tested positive for hantavirus (Andes virus).
 - This person has returned to Minnesota and is not currently symptomatic.
 - MDH and associated Local Health Departments are conducting ongoing public health monitoring.

Laboratory Testing options

- Testing is available through MDH as a send out to CDC.
- CDC is currently the only testing source for Andes hantavirus.
- All testing requires pre-approval prior to specimen submission: only symptomatic patients with identified Andes virus exposure are acceptable for testing.
 - No testing of asymptomatic patients is recommended at this time.
- Contact the MDH Epi Line (651-201-5414 or 877-676-5414) to start the CDC approval process.
- For approved specimens, the sample type is serum (frozen recommended) – gold-standard testing is IgM/IgG with a recommended collection 72 hours post symptom onset for highest yield.

Additional Information:

- [WHO: Hantavirus cluster linked to cruise ship travel, Multi-country \(www.who.int/emergencies/disease-outbreak-news/item/2026-DON599\)](http://www.who.int/emergencies/disease-outbreak-news/item/2026-DON599)
- [CDC: 2026 Multi-country Hantavirus Cluster Linked to Cruise Ship \(www.cdc.gov/han/php/notices/han00528.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/han/php/notices/han00528.html)
- [CDC: About Andes Virus \(www.cdc.gov/hantavirus/about/andesvirus.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/hantavirus/about/andesvirus.html)
- [Hantavirus \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/hantavirus/index.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/hantavirus/index.html)
- [MDH statement on monitoring a person potentially exposed to hantavirus overseas \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/news/pressrel/2026/statement051226.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/news/pressrel/2026/statement051226.html)

Questions: Please contact: Dr. Aaron Barnes, aaron.m.t.barnes@state.mn.us or 651-201-4184.

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****PLEASE FORWARD THIS TO ALL APPROPRIATE PERSONNEL WITHIN YOUR INSTITUTION AND HEALTH SYSTEM****

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Minnesota Laboratory System
Minnesota Department of Health, Public Health Laboratory
601 Robert St. N, St. Paul, MN 55164-0899
651-201-5200
health.mnlabsystem@state.mn.us
www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/idlab/mls/index.html

To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5200.