



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Health

COMMUNICATIONS UNIT

#4-6 Queen's Park East, Port of Spain 101002

Ministry of Health Advisory: Hantavirus

HANTAVIRUS FACT SHEET

The Ministry of Health is closely monitoring reports issued by the World Health Organization regarding a cluster of Hantavirus cases linked to an international cruise ship on route to the Canary Islands. At this time, there are **no confirmed cases in Trinidad and Tobago** ([World Health Organization](#)). At this time, global risk remains low as international health authorities confirmed eight cases, including three deaths among passengers.

What is Hantavirus?

Hantavirus is a viral disease spread primarily through contact with infected rodents and their urine, droppings (faeces), or saliva. People can become infected when virus particles become airborne and are inhaled, particularly during cleaning activities in rodent-infested areas ([World Health Organization](#)).

Human-to-human transmission is extremely rare and has only been documented with the Andes strain involved in this event. Unlike other hantaviruses, the Andes strain of the virus can be transmitted directly between humans, usually involving close, prolonged, or intimate contact with an infected person's bodily fluids (saliva, urine, blood) ([CDC](#)).

How is it Spread?

Persons may become infected through:

- Breathing in contaminated dust from rodent urine or droppings,
- Touching contaminated surfaces and then touching the nose or mouth,
- Handling rodents or rodent nests, and
- Consuming food contaminated by rodents.

Risk may increase during the rainy season when rodents move into homes, kitchens, drains and storage areas.



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Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms can appear between 1 to 8 weeks after exposure and may include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Chills
- Nausea or vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Diarrhea
- Shortness of breath
- Rapid breathing or respiratory distress

Severe cases can progress quickly and require urgent medical care ([World Health Organization](#)).

How to Reduce Rodent Presence Around Your Home

The best protection is preventing rodent infestations.

Source Reduction Measures

- Store food in sealed containers
- Dispose of garbage properly and regularly
- Keep kitchens, drains and yards clean
- Remove clutter, old boxes and debris where rodents can hide
- Seal holes and openings around homes
- Trim overgrown vegetation
- Avoid leaving pet food exposed overnight

IMPORTANT: Safe Cleaning of Rodent Droppings

DO NOT:

- Dry sweep rodent droppings
- Vacuum contaminated areas

These actions can release virus particles into the air.

Safe Cleaning Steps (“Wet Cleaning” Method)



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Before Cleaning:

- Open windows and doors for ventilation
- Wear gloves and, if possible, a mask

Cleaning Process:

1. Spray droppings and contaminated surfaces with:
 - bleach solution (1 part bleach to 9 parts water), or
 - household disinfectant
2. Allow the area to soak for at least 5 minutes
3. Wipe up using paper towels or disposable cloths with gloves.
4. Place waste in sealed plastic bags
5. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after cleaning.

When to Seek Medical Attention

Seek medical care if you develop:

- fever,
- difficulty breathing,
- or flu-like symptoms, particularly after exposure to rodents or rodent-infested environments.

The Ministry of Health continues to monitor the international and regional situation while maintaining active surveillance for unusual respiratory illnesses amongst the population

Members of the public are encouraged to maintain proper environmental sanitation and rodent control measures to reduce the risk of rodent-borne diseases, including Hantavirus and Leptospirosis.

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