

Hantavirus Diagnostic and Prevention Considerations in Illinois

May 19, 2026

Summary and Action Items:

- 1) **The risk of hantavirus infection in Illinois is extremely low.**
- 2) Hantaviruses are a family of viruses that can cause severe illness including [hantavirus pulmonary syndrome \(HPS\)](#) and [hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome \(HFRS\)](#) in people exposed to certain rodent species. Hantavirus infections are reportable, and consultation with public health is recommended prior to testing.
- 3) [Andes virus](#), a type of hantavirus endemic in South America and the only known hantavirus that spreads person-to-person, should only be considered in patients who:
 - (a) have symptoms compatible with hantavirus infection; AND
 - (b) were aboard the MV Hondius cruise ship OR had direct contact with someone associated with the MV Hondius Andes virus outbreak.

All Andes virus testing must be pre-approved by IDPH and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

- 4) [Other hantavirus testing](#) should only be considered in patients who:
 - (a) have symptoms compatible with HPS; AND
 - (b) have a history of known or suspected exposure to sylvatic rodents or rodent excreta (e.g., urine, droppings, or nesting materials).
 - (c) Supportive tests such as Complete Blood Count (CBC) and [additional diagnostic testing](#) to **rule out other causes of acute respiratory illness are extremely important given rarity of this condition and higher likelihood of alternate diagnoses.**

Background:

[Hantaviruses](#) are a family of viruses that are spread mainly through exposure to rodents and their urine, droppings, or saliva. Hantaviruses cause two clinical syndromes: [hantavirus pulmonary syndrome \(HPS\)](#) and [hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome \(HFRS\)](#). Hantaviruses found in the Western Hemisphere, so-called New World hantaviruses, predominantly cause HPS which begins as a flu-like illness before progressing 3–7 days later to a severe phase marked by pulmonary edema and difficulty breathing. Several New World hantaviruses, including Sin Nombre virus, are found in North America but these are NOT transmissible person to person and are rare. **Since 1993, Illinois has reported only seven cases of HPS, most recently in March 2025.**

On May 2, 2026, the World Health Organization was notified of a cluster of severe acute respiratory illness among passengers of the MV Hondius, a Dutch cruise ship in the Atlantic Ocean. On May 6, 2026, the cluster was confirmed to be caused by Andes virus, a New World hantavirus, endemic in South America. See CDC Health Advisory Network (HAN) from May 8, 2026: [2026 Multi-country Hantavirus Cluster Linked to Cruise Ship | HAN | CDC](#). **Andes virus is the only known hantavirus known to spread from person to person**, and the rodents that carry Andes virus do not live in North America.

Diagnosis & Testing:

Andes virus should only be considered in patients who:

- a) **have symptoms compatible with hantavirus infection; AND**
 - b) **were aboard the MV Hondius cruise ship OR had direct contact with someone associated with the MV Hondius Andes virus outbreak.**
- A CLIA-validated Andes virus–specific rRT-PCR assay is available at the Nebraska Public Health Laboratory. However, sensitivity may be reduced for specimens collected later in the course of illness, as viremia may be low or undetectable beyond approximately 7–10 days after symptom onset.
 - All Andes virus testing must be pre-approved by IDPH and CDC. Contact your public health department *immediately* upon suspicion of Andes virus.

Other New World hantaviruses should only be considered in patients who:

- a) **have symptoms compatible with HPS; AND**
 - b) **have a history of known or suspected exposure to sylvatic rodents or rodent excreta (e.g., urine, droppings, or nesting materials).**
- Consultation with your local health department is recommended prior to testing given rarity of this condition and high likelihood of an alternate diagnosis.
 - Thrombocytopenia is common in HPS. Other characteristic findings include neutrophilic leukocytosis with immature granulocytes and increased hematocrit. Supportive tests such as CBC and additional diagnostic testing to rule out other causes of acute respiratory illness should be considered.
 - CLIA diagnostic assays for detection of New World hantavirus IgM and IgG antibodies are available at CDC, some state public health laboratories, and Quest Diagnostics. Commercial testing can produce false positive results, especially when pre-test probability is low. Positive commercial tests require confirmatory testing at CDC or other public health laboratories.
 - If a serum specimen collected within 72 hours of symptom onset tests negative for IgM and IgG antibodies, a second specimen collected more than 72 hours after symptom onset should be submitted to rule out New World hantavirus infection.

Infection Prevention & Control:

Avoid exposure to rodents and their excrement by sealing holes and gaps in your home or garage, placing traps to decrease infestations, and storing food that might attract rodents in your home, when camping, and in other environments. Take proper precautions when cleaning up dead rodents or nests: [How to Clean Up After Rodents | Healthy Pets, Healthy People | CDC](#).

For patients suspected or confirmed to have the Andes virus, the CDC recommends patient placement in an AIIR (airborne infection isolation room) and the use of gown, gloves, eye protection, and N95 respirator or higher when entering the patient's room (see [Appendix A: Andes virus](#)).

When caring for a patient suspected or confirmed to have a more common domestic hantavirus, standard precautions are recommended.

Treatment:

There is no specific treatment for hantavirus infection, such as anti-viral medication. Patients should receive supportive care based on the severity of symptoms. Severe cases of HPS may require advanced care including intubation and mechanical ventilation, up to extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO). Severe cases of HFRS may require dialysis.

Reporting:

Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome cases are reportable by phone to the [local health department](#) immediately, within 24 hours. If unable to reach your local health department after hours, contact the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) at 217-782-7860 to reach on-call IDPH staff. Laboratories shall forward clinical materials positive for hantavirus to the state public health laboratory.

Additional Resources & References:

[IDPH Hantaviruses](#)

[CDC: Andes Virus Outbreak on a Cruise Ship: Current Situation](#)

[CDC: Andes Virus Outbreak on a Cruise Ship: Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Interim Guidance for Public Health Assessment and Management of People with Potential Exposure to Andes Virus](#)

[2026 Multi-country Hantavirus Cluster Linked to Cruise Ship | HAN | CDC](#)

[2026 Hantavirus Outbreak: Testing for Potential Infection | HAN | CDC](#)

[CDC: Veterinary Guidance](#)

Target Audience: Healthcare Providers, Hospital Infection Preventionists, Emergency Departments, Local Health Departments

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