

# South American Hemorrhagic Fevers

Project ECHO / Jessica Pavlick, DrPH, MPH / April 30, 2026

# Preparing for High Consequence Infectious Diseases

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Preparing for **High Consequence Infectious Diseases (HCIDs)**—such as **Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers, MERS, SARS, novel pandemic influenza, and** other emerging pathogens—requires healthcare providers to plan for **rare but high-impact events**.

Preparedness is about systems, people, and practice.

- Systems – team designation, written policies, and plans
- People – standardize questions asked at entry points
- Practice – training and consistency

# South American Hemorrhagic Fevers (HF)

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- Group of viral hemorrhagic fevers caused by arenaviruses
  - Argentine HF (Junín virus)
  - Bolivian HF (Machupo virus)
  - Venezuelan HF (Guanarito virus)
  - Brazilian HF (Sabia virus)
  - Chapare HF
- Endemic in South America
- Transmitted primarily through rodent exposure
- Can cause severe illness and death

# Identify, Isolate, AND Inform

## IDENTIFY

- Identify patients with:
  - Travel to areas with current outbreaks or endemic disease OR
  - Contact with sick persons who recently traveled AND
  - Symptoms of illness
- Use Travel Clinical Assistant to help identify which diseases are present in traveled areas.
- Collect detailed travel information from last 21 days.
- Collect detailed information on symptom onset and progression.
- Inquire about other potential exposures (ex: school, camp, places of worship, funerals, healthcare facilities, animals).

## ISOLATE

- Isolate patients that have both exposure and symptoms.
  - Place patient in a private room.
  - Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when entering the room.
  - Limit the number of healthcare personnel that enter the room.

## INFORM

- Inform Infection Prevention and Control.
- Inform State Public Health
  - Call 1-866-PUB-HLTH (1-866-782-4584).
  - Provide reason for calling, brief patient history and ask for a Medical Epidemiologist.
  - Depending on the situation, the Med Epi will need the following information:
    - Locations (countries and/or cities) and exact dates of travel.
    - Symptoms and progression of illness.
    - Risk Factors/exposures

# Identify: Recognize Early

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## Key Elements:

- Travel to endemic areas (Argentina, Bolivia, Venezuela, Brazil)
- Exposure to rodents and their environment
- Compatible symptoms:
  - Prodromal symptoms (1-7 days): flu-like, including high fever, headache, malaise, muscle pain, vomiting
  - Severe symptoms (After 4-5 days): hemorrhaging gums, mouth, nose, and gastrointestinal tract

# Isolate: Prevent Transmission

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While many South American VHFs are primarily rodent-borne, **person-to-person transmission can occur** particularly through:

- Exposure to blood and body fluids
- Healthcare procedures

Isolation measures should include:

- Patient placed in single room
- Appropriate precautions and proper PPE usage

# Inform: Quick Notification

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**Inform** refers to the **timely notification to appropriate internal and external partners** once a patient with a suspected or confirmed high consequence infectious disease (HCID) has been **identified and isolated**.

Early notification is essential to:

- Protect healthcare workers and the public
- Activate public health response and contact tracing
- Ensure appropriate testing, transport, and treatment
- Prevent secondary transmission

# Who to Inform

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## **Internal Notifications (Immediate)**

- These usually occur first and simultaneously
- Infection Prevention
- Hospital Administration or incident command

## **External Notifications**

- Public Health
- Georgia 24/7 Public Health Hotline **1-866-PUB-HLTH (1-866-782-4584)**

# Information Requested by Public Health

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- Patient demographics
- Travel history (specific travel dates and locations)
- Exposures (sick contacts, funerals, animals, healthcare facilities)
- Current symptoms and progression of illness
- Results of any tests conducted
- Underlying health conditions
- Current medications
- Vaccine history and prophylaxis taken
- Hospitalization plan
- Additional information (languages spoken, co-travelers)

# Risk Assessment

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- Medical Epidemiologist will conduct a risk assessment
- If no risk of an HCID is identified = response ends for an HCID
- If risk of HCID is identified:
  - Identify and coordinate if transportation is necessary to a higher-level facility (assessment or treatment)
  - Assist with guidance about specimen collection and transportation to the public health laboratory

# Investigation

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- Contact tracing to identify exposed individuals
- Exposed contacts:
  - Enrolled in active monitoring
  - Quarantine
  - Coordinate testing if symptoms present

# Key Principles of Identify, Isolate and Inform

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**Early:** enables early identification of a high consequence pathogen

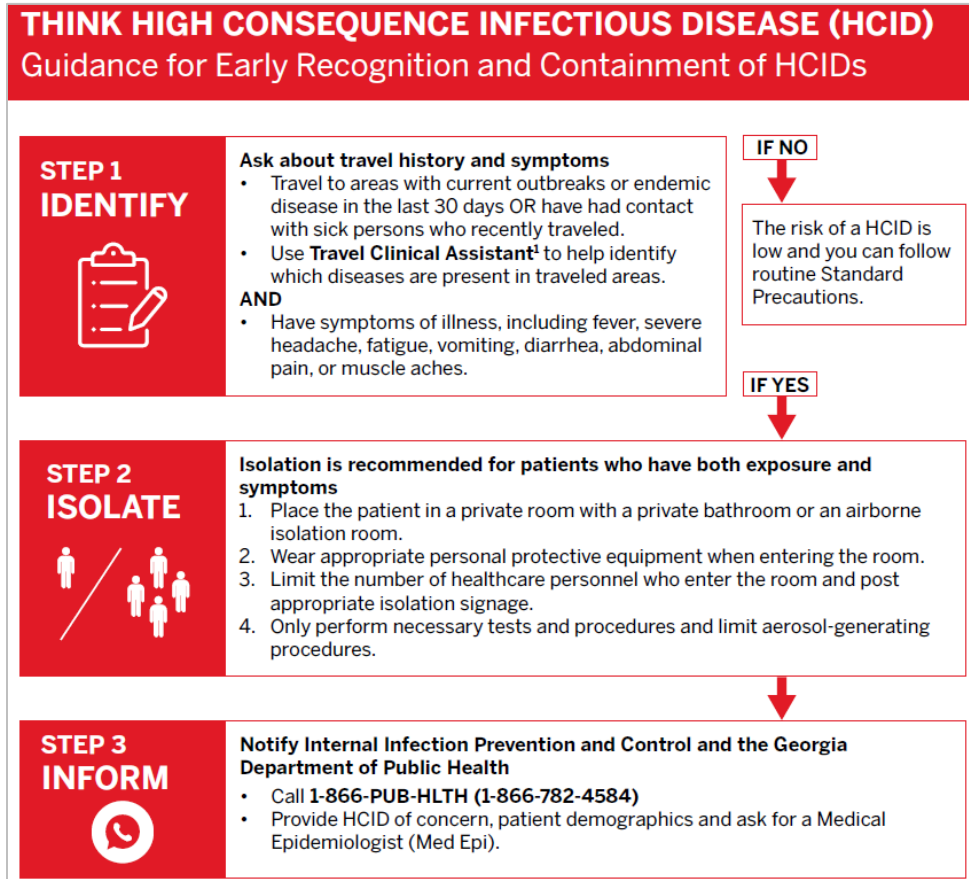
**Prevention:** prevents healthcare exposures

**Parallel:** Inform multiple stakeholders at the same time

**Coordinated:** Triggers rapid public health intervention and response

# Think High Consequence Infectious Disease

## HCID Screening Tool



## Think HCID Magnet

Healthcare Providers

Think High Consequence Infectious Diseases

1. Identify
2. Isolate
3. Inform

Make Travel History Part of Your Routine

Travel History + Symptoms = **1-866-PUB-HLTH**  
(1-866-782-4584)  
Follow prompts to ask for med epi



Scan for  
Travel Clinical  
Assistant



# Questions

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