



National
Psychotrauma
Centre

**Information on stress responses, processing,
and support after possible exposure to the
hantavirus**

Information on stress responses, processing, and support after possible exposure to the hantavirus

The events surrounding the possible exposure to the hantavirus, the medical monitoring, the stay on board, the return to the Netherlands and a possible period of home quarantine can cause a lot of tension and uncertainty. The uncertainty about whether complaints will develop can also be emotionally taxing.

Stress reactions such as restlessness, poor sleep, increased alertness, worrying, and physical tension are normal reactions in this situation. Reliable and clear information is important to limit unrest and speculation. This leaflet provides information about which reactions can occur, what can help with recovery and where you can go for support.

Emotional reactions after a major event

Many people experience stress reactions in the first days or weeks after a major or potentially life-threatening situation. The severity and duration of these reactions vary from person to person. Some people recover quickly, while others need more time.

Common reactions

- Fatigue and sleep problems
- Irritability or being impatient
- Difficulty concentrating or forgetfulness
- Increased vigilance or reacting startled
- Reliving or worrying
- Need to avoid conversations or crowds
- Closing oneself off from others
- Excessive alcohol or drug use
- Pretending nothing happened
- Constantly following the news or discussions about the event

Reliving and avoiding

Memories of the event can come back unexpectedly, for example as thoughts, dreams, or nightmares. At the same time, it can be nice to look for distractions or to avoid certain situations for a while. Both reactions are part of processing a major event.

Increased tension and alertness

You may feel more anxious or alert than usual. Loud noises or unexpected events can trigger startled reactions. You can also react emotionally or irritably more quickly.

What helps with recovery and processing?

Rest, structure, contact with others, and maintaining a daily rhythm often help with recovery, especially during a period of home quarantine.

What can help?

- Sufficient rest, sleep and regularity
- Maintain a daily rhythm and schedule time for activities and relaxation
- Keep in touch with family, friends and other people involved, for example by phone or video calling
- Discuss feelings and concerns
- Stay (physically) active and staying active in a way that fits within the quarantine rules, such as walking in the house or garden, yoga or exercising at home
- Alternate between processing, relaxation and distraction
- Find peace and distraction in hobbies or home activities
- Consciously dose the amount of news and social media about the event
- Recognize that feelings of tension, insecurity, or frustration are normal reactions in this situation
- Track reliable information

Dealing with home quarantine

A period of home quarantine can increase feelings of loneliness, boredom, uncertainty, or tension. It often helps to have a daily structure, to keep in touch with others, and to stay active. Differences in how people deal with quarantine and stress are normal. Give yourself time to recover and ask for support when you feel it is needed.

Contact with fellow travelers

Telephone or online contact with fellow travelers, family or other people involved can be supportive. At the same time, people differ in how they process events; Those differences are normal.

When professional help may be needed

Most people recover without long-term symptoms. Sometimes extra support is needed, for example when psychological complaints persist for a long time or increase over time.

Contact a doctor or counselor when experiencing:

- Severe anxiety, tension or sadness
- Persistent sleep problems or nightmares
- Frequent reliving of the situation
- Problems concerning work, family, or daily functioning
- Use of alcohol, drugs or medication to reduce tension
- Serious tensions within relationships or family

Extra risk of long-term symptoms

People who have previously experienced major events or already had psychological complaints may have more difficulty coping.

More information and support

If you need a conversation or support, you can use the contact options below.

- Victim Support Netherlands is available for emotional support via www.slachtofferhulp.nl. By phone: 0900-0101 (on working days from 8:00 to 20:00 and on Saturdays from 10:00 to 17:00), or on 088-7460879 (on Sundays from 09:00 to 21:00).
- Reliable information about the virus is available at: Hantavirus | RIVM (www.rivm.nl/en/hantavirus)