

# American Samoa schools reopen after pink eye woes

April 15 2014, by Fili Sagapolutele

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Public schools in American Samoa fully reopened Monday after some 3,000 students and teachers contracted pink eye, an outbreak that prompted tourism officials to warn cruise passengers heading to the group of islands in the South Pacific.

Schools in the U.S. territory's main island of Tutuila reopened for the first time since April 4. They make up the bulk of the 28 facilities that shut their doors on the islands about halfway between New Zealand and Hawaii. Students at four schools got back to class last week.

Education Department Director Salu Hunkin-Finau said the closures helped minimize the outbreak by preventing students and staff from spreading the condition.

She says students and teachers who still have [pink eye](#) should stay home. Hunkin-Finau herself was home sick Monday, recovering from "the tail end of pink eye" and bronchitis.

Conjunctivitis, better known as pink eye, is a common eye condition and can be extremely contagious. It inflames tissue on the eyeball and lining the eyelid, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said.

Meanwhile, the territory's Health Department was setting up sanitation stations at its port, where a cruise liner called the Golden Princess with more than 2,500 passengers aboard is scheduled to arrive Tuesday, said David Vaeafe, executive director of the American Samoa Visitors

Bureau.

Agents for the Princess Cruises vessel traveling from Maui have been told about the outbreak, as have agents for two other cruises scheduled to arrive this month.

"Health officials will be at the sanitation station throughout the eight hours the Golden Princess is in port," Vaeafe said Monday.

The outbreak also has affected some court cases and a handful of passengers trying to board flights to Honolulu.

Health officials in the territory have said the [outbreak](#) is a nuisance but not particularly dangerous.

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