

# More than 200 people sickened onboard Ovation of Seas cruise

December 14 2017, by Beth J. Harpaz

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More than 200 people became sick and five were hospitalized in Australia after an outbreak of gastrointestinal illness aboard a cruise ship earlier this month.

Symptoms were reported by 209 guests among the 5,796 people aboard Ovation of the Seas ship, according to Royal Caribbean International cruise line spokeswoman Cynthia Martinez. The ship returned to Sydney on Dec. 7 at the end of a 14-night cruise that departed Singapore on Nov. 23. "Those affected by the short-lived [illness](#) were treated by our ship's doctors with over-the-counter medication," Martinez told The Associated Press in an email.

She said sanitation experts were flown in to perform "enhanced sanitary procedures" to supplement routine cleaning protocols and "minimize the risk of a recurrence."

Martinez said she had no details on the type of [gastrointestinal illness](#) and would not provide conditions of the hospitalized guests out of privacy concerns.

Australia's Health Department in Tasmania said five passengers required treatment at Royal Hobart Hospital, where Dr. Mark Veitch, director of public health, said in a statement that the ship was using established protocols to manage the illness and limit its spread. He added that these types of outbreaks and requests for medical assistance for passengers are "not uncommon" in big [ships](#).

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control tracks gastrointestinal illness reports on ships sailing from foreign ports to the U.S. The Ovation of the Seas [outbreak](#) falls outside CDC jurisdiction because of the ship's location.

The CDC's online database lists 10 outbreaks this year on ships in which more than 3 percent of those onboard reported symptoms of "diarrheal disease."

The husband of one Ovation of the Seas passenger hospitalized at Hobart said his wife had eaten "undercooked chicken" onboard. "Her condition continued to worsen and I thought she was going to die in front of me," said the passenger, who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity, citing privacy issues. He said she was recovering in the [intensive care unit](#).

The ship has been on a New Zealand itinerary and is now headed back to Sydney.

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