

OSHMed Magazine

Occupational Safety & Health and Medical

by



HANTAVIRUS NAMIBIA ON ALERT AMID GLOBAL MONITORING

NAVIGATING INFECTION RISKS ON CRUISE SHIPS • HEALTH & SAFETY: CRITICAL FIRST STEP IN PREVENTING CONSTRUCTION FALLS • FUN TIME - JOKE OF THE WEEK • E.M.A. WEEKLY EMERGENCY STATISTICS

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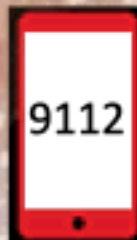
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Hantavirus: Namibia on Alert Amid Global Monitoring

WINDHOEK – The Namibian Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS) has issued a public alert regarding **Hantavirus**. While the virus may sound unfamiliar to many in the region, recent international developments have prompted local health authorities to strengthen surveillance and remind the public of the importance of rodent control.

The Current Situation in Namibia

Currently, **Namibia has no laboratory-confirmed cases of Hantavirus**.

However, the MoHSS is closely monitoring a recent outbreak linked to a cruise ship traveling across the South Atlantic. This cluster has reported **8 cases**, including **3 deaths**. Notably, some of these cases involve the **Andes strain**, which is unique

because it is the only Hantavirus variant known to allow limited human-to-human transmission.

Because one of the patients from this cluster is receiving intensive care in neighbouring **South Africa**, Namibian authorities are taking a proactive stance to ensure the public remains informed and prepared.

What is Hantavirus?

Hantaviruses are a family of viruses spread mainly by **rodents** (such as mice and rats). Unlike the flu or the common cold, Hantavirus is typically contracted through contact with infected rodent urine, droppings, or saliva.

How it Spreads:

- **Aerosolisation:** Breathing in tiny droplets of the virus when dried rodent waste is disturbed (e.g., during sweeping).

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- **Direct Contact:** Touching contaminated materials and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- **Bites:** Although rare, a bite from an infected rodent can transmit the virus.

- **Fatigue:** Extreme tiredness.
- **Gastrointestinal Issues:** Nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, or abdominal pain.

Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms typically appear **1 to 8 weeks** after exposure. The disease often progresses in two distinct stages:

1. Early Symptoms (The "Flu-Like" Phase)

- **Fever and Chills:** Sudden onset of high temperature.
- **Muscle Aches:** Particularly in the large muscle groups like the thighs, hips, and back.

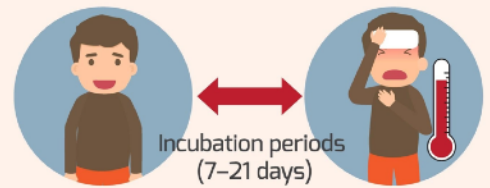
2. Late Symptoms (The Respiratory Phase)

Roughly **4 to 10 days** after the initial symptoms, the disease can progress to **Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS):**

- Shortness of breath and coughing.
- A feeling of "tightness" in the chest as the lungs fill with fluid.
- Rapidly declining blood pressure.

LASSA FEVER : VIRUS INFOGRAPHIC

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Transmission



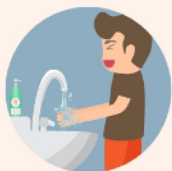
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Important: If you develop these symptoms after being in contact with rodents or cleaning an area where rodents were present, seek medical attention immediately.



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Preventive Measures: "Seal Up, Trap Up, Clean Up"

There is no specific vaccine or cure for Hantavirus, so **prevention is your best defence.**

1. **Seal Up:** Use steel wool or cement to plug any holes in your home larger than 6mm (the width of a pencil).
2. **Trap Up:** Use snap traps to clear out any existing rodent populations. Avoid using glue traps, as live rodents can release more virus in distress.
3. **Clean Up:**
 - **Do Not Sweep or Vacuum:** This kicks the virus into the air.
 - **Wet Cleaning:** Spray droppings or nests with a mixture of **bleach and water** (1 part bleach to 9 parts water). Let it soak for 5 minutes before wiping it up with a paper towel.
 - **Ventilation:** Open windows and doors for at least 30 minutes before cleaning a room that has been closed up and infested with rodents.

The Global Situation: WHO Perspective
The World Health Organisation (WHO) currently assesses the global risk as low,

but they remain on high alert. In late 2025, there was a recorded increase in Hantavirus cases across the Americas, particularly in the "Southern Cone" region.

The current cruise ship event in the South Atlantic is being managed through the International Health Regulations framework. WHO is coordinating with multiple countries, including the UK, South Africa, and Cabo Verde, to track the spread and ensure that the **Andes strain**—with its potential for person-to-person transmission—is contained.

[Namibia monitors Hantavirus outbreak](#)

This news report provides the official statement from the Namibian Ministry of Health regarding their current surveillance of the global Hantavirus situation.

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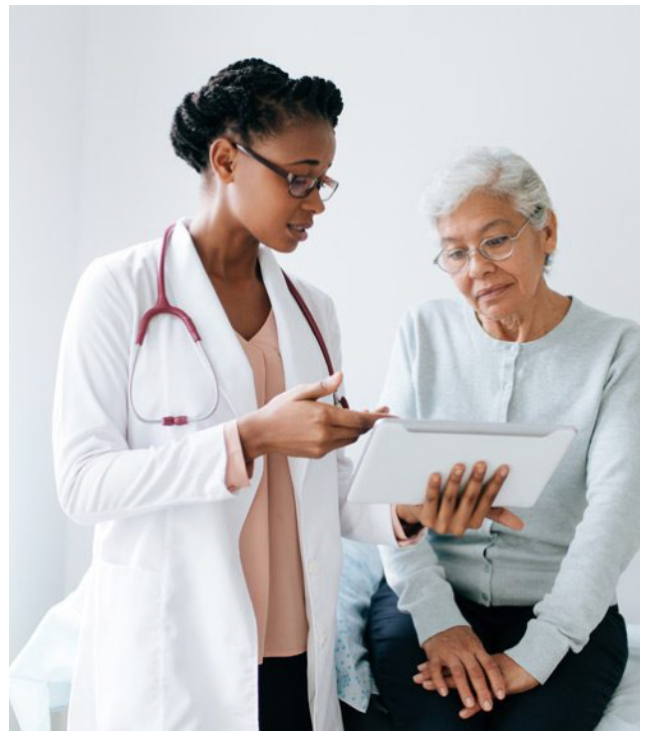
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This discovery suggests that daily activities like walking, postural adjustments, or core-focused exercises (such as Pilates or functional training) act as a form of "manual maintenance" for the brain's plumbing system.

3. Why This Matters for Namibia

While these studies were conducted in high-tech laboratories, their implications are deeply relevant to Namibian health. As our healthcare system evolves, there is an increasing need to focus on preventative geriatric care.

Recent reports from the *University of Namibia* have highlighted a need for greater dementia awareness and specialised care strategies. These new findings suggest that we do not have to wait for expensive, high-end drugs to begin protecting our aging population. By promoting lifestyle



interventions—such as core strength and general physical activity—we can empower Namibians to take proactive steps in "rinsing" their brains and preserving their memories.

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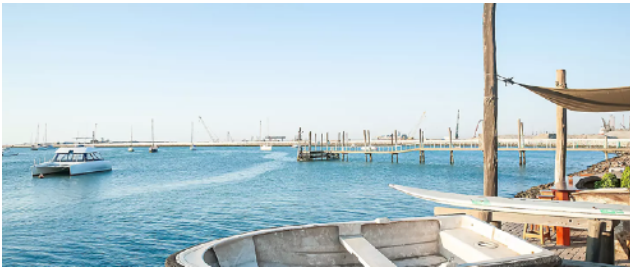
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The Hidden Stowaways: Navigating Infection Risks on Cruise Ships

WALVIS BAY – With coastal hubs like Walvis Bay frequently welcoming massive luxury liners, and a growing number of Namibians taking to the seas for holidays, cruise ships are a popular way to see the world. However, as recent headlines have shown—including a Norovirus surge in late 2025 and a concerning Hantavirus cluster in the spring of 2026—these "floating hotels" can sometimes become hotspots for infectious diseases.



But why do outbreaks seem to happen so often at sea, and how can travellers protect themselves? A recent report by the German health publication *Apotheken Umschau* sheds light on the unique environment of cruise ships and offers practical advice for staying healthy on board.

The Perfect Environment for Pathogens

When disease outbreaks occur on cruise ships, they tend to make international news. This isn't necessarily because cruises are inherently dangerous, but because an outbreak in an isolated, closely monitored environment is noticed much faster than on land.

According to Prof. Dr. Christian Sieben, head of the Nano-infection Biology research group at the Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, the design of a cruise vacation naturally favours viruses. "On cruise ships, people are mostly indoors—and they are close together, for example at peak times at the buffet," he explains.

Passengers share limited space for days or weeks. From cabins and elevators to theatres and sports facilities, people are constantly crossing paths. Once a pathogen makes its way on board, these shared touch points provide ideal conditions for it to spread rapidly.

What Are You Likely to Catch?

Depending on the route, the crew, and the passengers, various pathogens can find their way onto a ship:

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- **Norovirus:** This is the most notorious cruise ship bug. It requires only a tiny amount of virus to cause an infection and spreads easily via hands, surfaces, or contaminated food. It leads to sudden, severe vomiting and diarrhoea.
- **Respiratory Viruses:** Influenza, RSV, and coronaviruses thrive in close-quarter environments, easily passing from person to person through the air.
- **Bacterial Infections:** Bacteria like *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, or *E. coli* can cause gastrointestinal distress,

while *Legionella* can occasionally spread through the ship's water systems.

- **Exotic Errand-Runners:** Ships dock in different climate zones where passengers disembark, eat local food, and come into contact with animals or mosquitoes. This is how rare infections—such as Dengue fever, Chikungunya, or the recent Hantavirus—make their way onto a ship. Often, multiple passengers are exposed to the same risk during a shore excursion, and the symptoms only appear once they are back at sea.

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Who is Most at Risk?

For the average healthy Namibian, a cruise is perfectly safe. However, the risk is not equal for everyone. Individuals with weakened immune systems, or chronic heart, lung, or metabolic diseases, face a higher risk of severe complications if they catch a virus on board.

If you fall into a high-risk category, it is highly recommended to speak with your doctor before booking. You should also verify the medical facilities available on the ship: Is there a ship's doctor? What kind of emergency treatments can they provide at sea?

Furthermore, travellers must take personal responsibility. If you feel ill, have a fever, cough, or stomach issues shortly before departure, you should consult a doctor and consider postponing your trip to avoid

infecting hundreds of fellow passengers. Investing in good travel cancellation insurance is always a smart move.

How to Protect Yourself on Board

If you are already packed and ready to sail, you don't need to spend your vacation locked in your cabin. Prof. Sieben suggests a few simple, highly effective strategies to minimise your risk:

1. **Prioritise Hand Hygiene:** Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, especially before eating and after touching highly trafficked surfaces like elevator buttons or stair rails.
2. **Keep Hands Off Your Face:** Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth, as this is how many surface viruses enter the body.
3. **Beat the Crowds:** Avoid the buffet during rush hours. Eating when the dining halls are less crowded drastically reduces your close-contact exposure.
4. **Mask Up in a Pinch:** If you find yourself in a very crowded, poorly ventilated indoor space (like a packed theatre or waiting area), wearing an FFP2/N95 mask is still an excellent defence against respiratory droplets.

A cruise should be a time to relax and recharge. By practicing basic hygiene and being mindful of crowds, you can ensure that the only things you bring back to Namibia are souvenirs and good memories —not unwanted stowaways.

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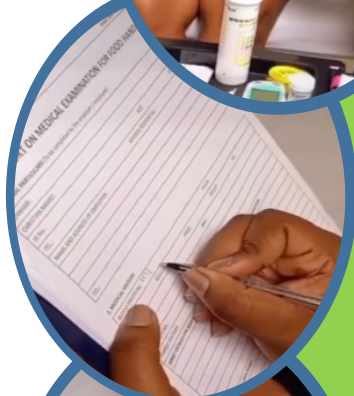
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Health & Safety - Stepping Up by Standing Down: The Critical First Step in Preventing Construction Falls

***WINDHOEK** – As Namibia continues to develop its infrastructure—from the bustling commercial building sites in Windhoek to industrial expansions along the coast—the construction sector remains a vital engine of our economy. But with this growth comes a sobering reality: working at heights remains one of the most significant risks on any job site.*

Drawing inspiration from global best practices, such as the internationally recognised *National Safety Stand-Down to Prevent Falls in Construction*, the message for Namibian employers, contractors, and site managers is clear. The key to saving lives begins before the first tool is even lifted—it begins with comprehensive hazard assessment.

Identifying the Hazards Before Work Begins

Safety advocates and industry leaders are urging employers to regularly pause operations and begin the work week by conducting thorough, site-wide walk-throughs. The goal is simple but critical: identify potential risks before the work continues.

Too often, tragedies involving workers falling through fragile skylights, unprotected floor openings, or unguarded leading edges serve as devastating reminders of the high stakes involved in fall protection. To prevent these incidents, using standardised construction safety checklists is highly recommended to systematically evaluate job sites for these common, yet deadly, risks.

Engaging the Crew: Your Best Safety Asset

While checklists are essential, they are only part of the equation. A key component of

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this initial assessment phase involves engaging directly with the crews on the ground. The men and women performing the work daily often possess the most practical insights into where the hidden dangers lie and how fall prevention measures can be realistically improved.

By actively gathering these ground-level observations and worker feedback, site managers can effectively update or create a formal, tailored Accident Prevention Program that reflects the real-world conditions of their specific job site.

Strengthening Culture over Penalties

The ultimate goal of safety assessments should be proactive prevention rather than punitive action. Internationally, occupational safety models encourage businesses to utilize consultation services to review their sites. This approach allows companies to identify and correct serious hazards without the immediate fear of fines or penalties, shifting the focus entirely toward strengthening a true workplace safety culture. When workers and management collaborate to spot dangers, safety compliance becomes a shared, daily responsibility.

Equipping Your Team for Success with OSH-Med International

Knowing the hazards is step one; knowing how to manage them and respond to emergencies requires expert, localised training. To ensure your workforce is fully prepared to handle the realities of occupational hazards, partnering with trusted local experts is crucial.

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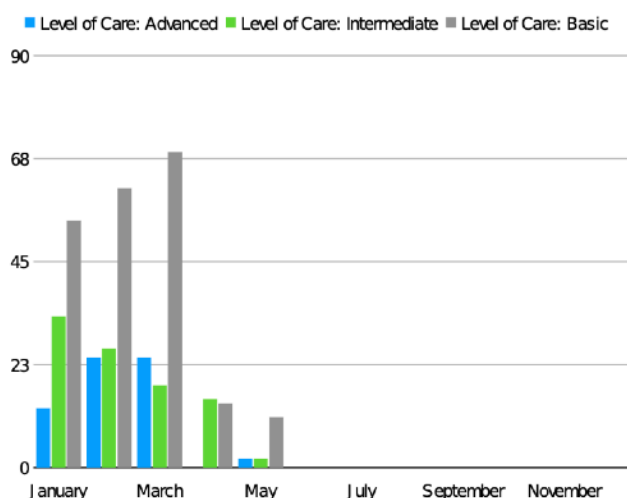
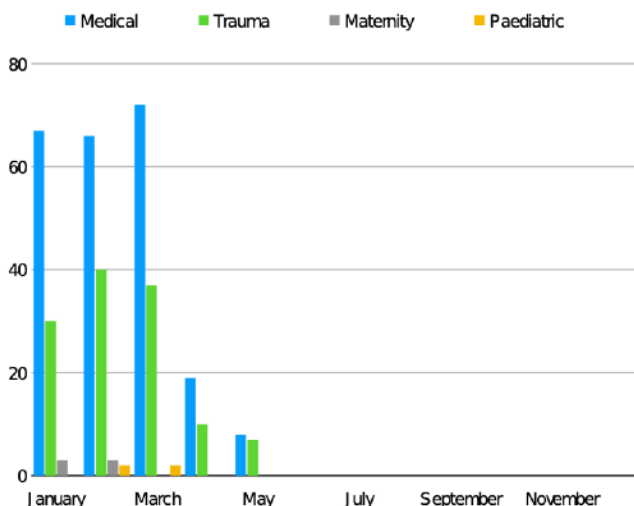
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January	67	30	3	0	13	33	54
February	66	40	3	2	24	26	61
March	72	37	0	2	24	18	69
April	19	10	0	0	0	15	14
May	8	7	0	0	2	2	11
June	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
July	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
August	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
September	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
October	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
November	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
December	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
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- **What** kind of injuries?
- **How many** injured person
- **Waiting** for further question

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