

OSHMed Magazine

Occupational Safety & Health and Medical

by





SATURDAY
18/10/2025

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Mind Matters: Windhoek Joins Global Call to Prioritise Mental Health

*The conversation around mental health took centre stage across the capital and the nation last week, as Namibia joined the global community in observing World Mental Health Day on Friday, October 10th. This year's theme, echoing the World Health Organisation (WHO), cantered on "**Mental Health is a Universal Human Right**," urging communities to dismantle barriers and foster environments where everyone can thrive.*

Four days on, the message remains loud and clear: mental well-being is not a luxury, but a fundamental component of overall health. Health officials are calling for sustained dialogue and action beyond the single day of awareness.

The Inseparable Link Between Mind and Body

For too long, physical and mental health have been treated as separate entities. However, the WHO emphasises a core principle: "**no health without mental health.**" The connection is undeniable. Chronic stress, anxiety, and depression can manifest physically, contributing to conditions like heart disease, weakened immune systems, and digestive issues. "We cannot hope to build a healthy nation by only focusing on the body," stated a representative from the Ministry of Health and Social Services during a panel discussion last week. "A healthy mind is the foundation for a productive, resilient, and flourishing society. When we invest in mental healthcare, we are investing in the future of Namibia." This holistic approach calls for integrating



mental health services into primary healthcare, schools, and workplaces, making support accessible and routine rather than a last resort.

Breaking the Stigma, Building Support

One of the most significant hurdles remains the stigma surrounding mental illness. Fear of judgment often prevents individuals from seeking the help they need. This year's awareness campaigns have strongly focused on encouraging open conversations in homes, schools, and communities.

While talking with friends and family is a powerful first step, professional, confidential help is available.

Where to Find Help: Confidential Helplines

Knowing who to call is a vital step in seeking support. Several organisations in Namibia offer free and confidential assistance.

- **LifeLine/Childline Namibia:** This is a primary point of contact for crisis support.
 - **Toll-Free Child Helpline:** 116
 - **Toll-Free Gender-Based Violence Helpline:** 106
- **Ministry of Health and Social Services:**
 - **Mental Health Centre (Windhoek Central Hospital):** +264 61 203 9111

(Provides psychological support during office hours)

- **Emergency Services:**
 - **Police:** 10111
 - **Ambulance:** 9112

Your Mental Well-being Toolkit

While systemic change is crucial, individuals can also take proactive steps to nurture their mental health. Experts recommend a few simple, yet effective, practices:

- **Stay Connected:** Make time for family and friends. Meaningful social connections are a powerful buffer against stress.

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- **Move Your Body:** Regular physical activity, even a brisk 30-minute walk, is proven to boost mood and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- **Practice Mindfulness:** Take a few minutes each day to focus on your breath and be present. This can help calm a racing mind.
- **Prioritise Sleep:** Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep per night. A rested mind is a more resilient mind.
- **Ask for Help:** Seeking support from a doctor, counsellor, or a

confidential helpline is a sign of strength, not weakness.

As the banners from World Mental Health Day come down, the real work begins. Let's continue this vital conversation and build a community where everyone feels seen, supported, and empowered to care for their mental health every day of the year.

Would you like me to find information on specific mental health services available in a particular region of Namibia?

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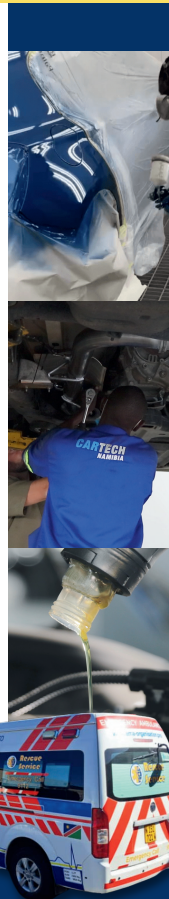
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Health Series - Calendar: All 40 Weeks of Pregnancy - week 34

Your baby could already be feeding independently. It's time to pack the hospital bag. And: Sometimes a cesarean section is necessary.

Weeks 34 of Pregnancy

Baby's Development

By the 34th week of pregnancy, your little one's sucking and swallowing reflexes are already largely developed. They've needed these often in recent weeks – they've been constantly swallowing amniotic fluid and repeatedly sucking their thumb. It paid off: If they were born now, they would usually be able to drink independently.

Because the unborn child continues to grow, your uterus continues to expand. By the end of this week, it reaches almost below your sternum, compressing your organs. It reaches its peak at around the 36th week. "This is when many women suffer most from shortness of breath," says Dr. Anke Diemert, who leads the PRINCE (Prenatal Identification of Children's Health) study on prenatal imprinting.

But this soon improves, because in preparation for birth, the baby slides down slightly and, over the following weeks, its head will make contact with your pelvis. "After the labor pains, breathing usually becomes easier for the pregnant woman," says Diemert.



Your baby's organs are now almost fully functional. Your little one will continue to gain weight and size in the last few weeks. During this week, unborn babies weigh an average of around 2,200 grams and are about 45 centimeters long. Of course, your baby may be a little smaller or larger – as is the case later in life, there are already significant differences in size and weight.

The Mother's Health

Even if you are determined to deliver your baby naturally, sometimes a cesarean section is unavoidable. A good 30 percent of babies in Germany are now born surgically. But not all of these are purely elective cesareans. Doctors often resort to surgical intervention because a vaginal delivery is not possible for medical reasons. This can be the case, for example, if the placenta is positioned in front of the cervix, the baby is in an unfavorable position, or the mother is expecting multiples. Sometimes the decision to perform a cesarean section is made only after labor has already begun and complications arise: These include, for example, a rupture in the uterus, premature detachment of the placenta, or a sudden drop in the baby's heart rate.

In many cases, a cesarean section can be performed under regional anesthesia (epidural or spinal anesthesia). The expectant mother remains fully

conscious, experiences the birth, and can welcome the baby immediately. However, sometimes—for example, in the case of an emergency cesarean section—general anesthesia may be necessary or advisable. Although a cesarean section is considered a routine procedure these days, it still carries certain risks, such as bleeding or wound infection. In the first few weeks after birth, mothers often struggle with the wound, so carrying the baby can be difficult at first.

Tip: Pack your hospital bag

It's about time to pack your hospital bag. After all, babies don't care about dates: Some make their way into the world earlier than planned, while others find it so comfortable in mom's tummy that they even stay there a little longer.

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ARMS

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Is there a slurred speech

TIME

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Health & Safety - Sun-Scorched Workers: Dehydration a Silent Threat

As another scorching Namibian summer approaches, a silent and often underestimated threat looms over the nation's workforce, particularly in the booming construction, mining, and agricultural sectors. Dehydration, more than just a simple thirst, is a serious occupational hazard that can lead to devastating consequences, from a drop in productivity to fatal heatstroke.



With temperatures regularly soaring above 35°C across the country, from the mines in the Erongo Region to the construction sites in Windhoek and the farms in the north, workers are constantly exposed to extreme heat. This puts them at a high risk of dehydration, a condition that occurs when the body loses more fluid than it takes in.

"We see it every year," says David //Garoeb, a safety officer at a construction site in the capital.

"A worker starts to feel dizzy, gets a headache, and their work slows down. They think it's just the heat, but it's often the first sign of dehydration. We had an incident last summer where a young man collapsed from heat exhaustion. Luckily, we got to him in time, but it was a wake-up call for everyone on site."

The dangers of dehydration extend beyond dizziness and fatigue. Medical experts warn that as a worker becomes dehydrated, their cognitive function is impaired, similar to the effects of consuming alcohol. This can lead to poor decision-making, slower reaction times, and an increased risk of accidents on a busy and potentially dangerous worksite.

"A dehydrated worker is a risk to themselves and their colleagues," explains Fabian Martens, an occupational health specialist. "Their concentration wanes, and they're more likely to make mistakes. In an environment with heavy machinery or at heights, a momentary lapse in judgment can be catastrophic."

Beyond Thirst: Recognizing the Warning Signs

Thirst is a late indicator of dehydration. By the time a worker feels thirsty, their body is already suffering from a fluid deficit. Early warning signs that both workers and their supervisors should be aware of include:

- **Dizziness and lightheadedness**
- **Headaches and muscle cramps**
- **Fatigue and weakness**
- **Dark-colored urine**
- **Low blood pressure and constipation**

In severe cases, dehydration can progress to heatstroke, a life-threatening condition that requires immediate medical attention.

Prevention is Vital: A Call for Proactive Hydration

Experts stress that preventing dehydration is far



more effective than treating it. Simply providing water, while essential, is not enough. For those working in intense heat for extended periods, electrolyte-rich drinks are recommended to replenish the salts and minerals lost through sweat.

"Employers need to be proactive," urges Fabian Martens. "This means implementing scheduled hydration breaks, rather than relying on workers to drink when they feel thirsty. It also means educating the workforce about the signs and dangers of dehydration and providing access to appropriate rehydration fluids."

Some forward-thinking companies are adopting more scientific approaches, such as encouraging workers to monitor their hydration levels by checking their urine colour or even using wearable technology to track fluid loss.

As Namibia continues to grow and develop, the health and safety of its workforce must remain a



top priority. Acknowledging and actively combating the risks of dehydration is a crucial step in ensuring that our nation's progress is not built on the back of preventable injuries and illnesses. For the men and women who brave the Namibian sun to build our future, a cool head and a hydrated body are their most essential tools.

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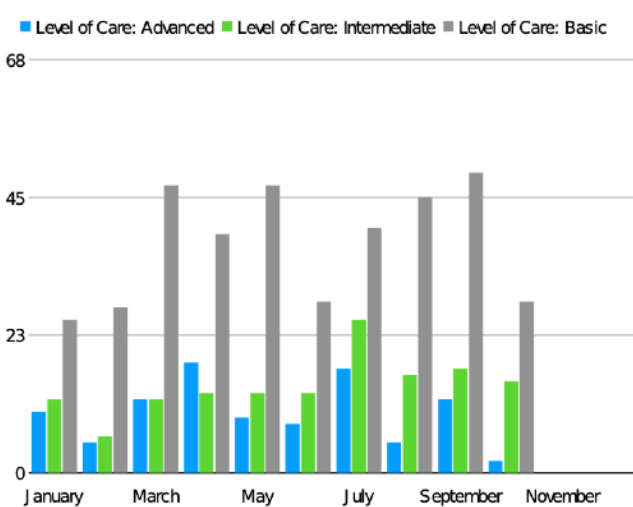
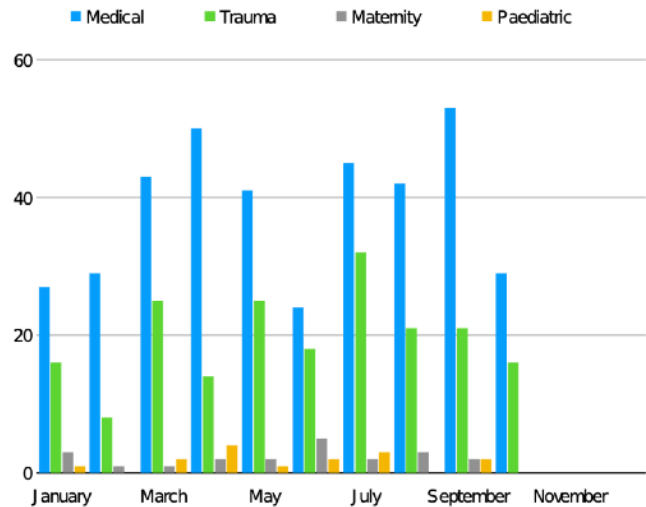
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updated 15.10.2025

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February	29	8	1	0	5	6	27
March	43	25	1	2	12	12	47
April	50	14	2	4	18	13	39
May	41	25	2	1	9	13	47
June	24	18	5	2	8	13	28
July	45	32	2	3	17	25	40
August	42	21	3	0	5	16	45
September	53	21	2	2	12	17	49
October	29	16	0	0	2	15	28
November							
December							
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Total	615				615		



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