

Covid-19 survivor narrates ‘debilitating experience’

 [namibiansun.com/news/covid-19-survivor-narrates-debilitating-experience2020-04-16](https://www.namibiansun.com/news/covid-19-survivor-narrates-debilitating-experience2020-04-16)



FIT AS A FIDDLE: Covid-19 survivor Xavier Neidel. **PHOTO:** CONTRIBUTED

ELIZABETH JOSEPH

WINDHOEK

Xavier Neidel’s life changed when he tested positive for the coronavirus on 23 March.

Today he can boldly speak, as he has recovered fully.

“I decided to come out and share my story to help enlighten the public with regards to Covid-19. I want people to know that it is real and it can affect anyone,” he said.

Neidel (21), who is studying towards a postgraduate diploma in accounting at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, said he first felt obligated to get tested on 14 March after experiencing mild and infrequent symptoms.

Symptoms

“I had a runny nose, sore throat and a dry cough. A persistent dry cough at first, but I ignored it because I hadn’t travelled internationally. I also figured I didn’t have any contact with someone who had tested positive,” he said.

The week before, a medical student at the same university tested positive for the virus.

He hadn’t realised that they lived in the same residence, Neidel said.

“My symptoms persisted and I got worried. My cousins suggested I get tested and rather be safe knowing we don’t have it and, if we do, at least we were proactive to find out early.”

He got tested in Johannesburg at the Lancet Auckland Laboratory on 17 March, describing the test as a “daunting and debilitating experience”.

“I knew that due to the nature of the virus, I didn’t want to leave South Africa without knowing my status, while experiencing some symptoms,” he said.

However, the day before, the university ordered all students to vacate the residence within 72 hours. As an international student, he had no place to go but to come back home.

Precautions

“I treated myself as if I had the virus already, so I wore gloves and a surgical mask to ensure I don’t spread it further if I was positive.

“I was isolated in my room and had my own bathroom to use. My family had assigned certain cutlery for me to use specifically and always left my food at the door. I had no interaction with them,” he added.

On 23 March, he received his results.

“I could not believe that it was real. Later that afternoon, I was informed that I would be taken to an isolation centre close to the Hosea Kutako International Airport.

“I was scared and extremely worried because it finally sunk in,” he said.

Isolation

At the facility, he was given a room as well as medicine and immune boosters. He said the staff were friendly and welcoming.

“The immune boosters were the first thing I had every morning to ensure I got the right amount of vitamins and I took a Vitamin C before sleeping every night,” he said.

Although he was anxious and homesick, Neidel said his time at the facility was “not bad”. A therapist was on call to help isolated patients cope with the situation.

“My mental health played a big role in my recovery. Because of my fear and anxiety peaking, I was making myself sick. The support and love from my family and friends changed my attitude about everything and had me focused on the end goal, which was recovery and getting home,” he said.

Further tests

In total, Neidel was tested three times.

The second and third tests came back negative.

“The first negative had me ecstatic, as I knew this was a good sign and that I must be doing something right,” he said, while the second had him jumping for joy.

His family all tested negative and are all in good health.