

Norwegian climber 1st to test positive on Mount Everest

23 April 2021, by Binaj Gurbacharya



Lukas Furtenbach, an ace mountain guide speaks during an interview with Associated Press in Kathmandu, Nepal, Friday, April 23, 2021. Furtenbach, warned that the virus could spread among the hundreds of other climbers, guides and helpers who are now camped on the base of Everest if all of them are not checked immediately and safety measures are taken. (AP Photo/Niranjan Shrestha)

The coronavirus has conquered the world's highest mountain.

A Norwegian [climber](#) became the first to be tested for COVID-19 in Mount Everest [base camp](#) and was flown by helicopter to Kathmandu, where he was hospitalized.

Erlend Ness told The Associated Press in a message Friday that he tested positive on April 15. He said another test on Thursday was negative and he was now staying with a local family in Nepal.

An ace mountain guide, Austrian Lukas Furtenbach, warned that the virus could spread among the hundreds of other climbers, guides and helpers who are now camped on the base of

Everest if all of them are not checked immediately and [safety measures](#) are taken.

Any outbreak could prematurely end the climbing season, just ahead of a window of good weather in May, he said.

"We would need now most urgently mass testing in base camp, with everyone tested and every team being isolated, no contact between teams," said Furtenbach. "That needs to be done now, otherwise it is too late."

Furtenbach, leading a team of 18 climbers to Mount Everest and its sister peak Mount Lhotse, said there could be more than just one case on the mountain as the Norwegian had lived with several others for weeks.

A Nepalese [mountaineering](#) official denied there were any active cases on the mountains at the moment.

Mira Acharya, director at the Department of Mountaineering, said she had no official information about the COVID-19 cases and only reports of illnesses like pneumonia and [altitude sickness](#).

Mountaineering was closed last year due to the pandemic and climbers returned to Everest this year for the first time since May 2019.

The popular spring climbing season in Nepal, which has eight of the highest peaks in the world, began in March and ends in May.

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APA citation: Norwegian climber 1st to test positive on Mount Everest (2021, April 23) retrieved 8 May 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-04-norwegian-climber-1st-positive-mount.html>

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