# Cruise safety tip: placing a water bottle on the cabin floor could save lives



Travel expert and medical doctor Dr Steve Burgess, who runs CME Vacations and specialises in educating healthcare professionals at international conferences, has shared a practical safety tip for cruise ship passengers. Dr Burgess, an enthusiast of cruising holidays himself, advises that placing a bottle of water on the floor near your bed in your stateroom can serve as an early warning system for emergencies at sea.

Dr Burgess explained this simple measure to the Daily Mail, saying: "Most passengers have no idea there's a simple five-second check they should perform the moment they enter their cruise cabin. Placing a water bottle on your cabin floor isn't a hydration reminder – it could literally save your life."

The principle behind the advice is that the water inside the bottle will react to subtle movements of the ship that may otherwise go unnoticed by sleeping passengers. This includes signs of a listing vessel or unusual vibrations that could indicate mechanical issues. Furthermore, condensation on the bottle could suggest smoke infiltration, which potentially arrives in cabins before smoke alarms are triggered, providing an additional alert to danger.

"Having this passive monitoring system in place gives you peace of mind and potentially crucial extra minutes to respond appropriately," said Dr Burgess, who emphasised that the trick is cost-free, quick to implement, and taught to healthcare professionals attending his courses. He highlighted that emergencies at sea are most likely to occur overnight when passengers are less alert, making such a precaution even more valuable.

While cruise liners are generally considered safe and serious incidents remain rare, Dr Burgess describes this simple habit as one that experienced cruisers commonly adopt—even though it is rarely covered in official safety briefings. "This simple habit has become second nature for experienced cruisers, but it's almost never mentioned in the safety briefings," he added.

Meanwhile, concerns about health safety on cruise ships have been raised by US paediatrician Dr Rubin, who recently shared on TikTok why he avoids boarding cruise ships. Dr Rubin pointed to recent federal budget cuts affecting the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) vessel sanitation programme, which performs biannual health inspections and outbreak tracing on cruise ships.

Dr Rubin noted that there have been 12 norovirus outbreaks on cruise ships in 2024 so far, compared to eight in 2023, and criticised the decision to reduce funding for this programme as illogical. He said: "Well one of [the cuts] is to the CDC's vessel sanitation program, which conducts health inspections on cruise ships at least twice a year and they trace outbreaks to help reduce the chances of more people getting sick... This makes absolutely no sense."

The reaction to Dr Rubin’s video was mixed, with some social media users accusing him of fearmongering while others shared their own experiences of illness aboard cruises. One user recalled catching COVID-19 during their cruise, while another commented, "They call Norovirus 'cruise ship virus' for a reason."

Norovirus remains a significant concern for cruise passengers, as highlighted by a recent outbreak on the Coral Princess ship. The vessel embarked from California on 21 February and headed for Fort Lauderdale via several Mexican west coast ports and the Panama Canal. During the trip, 69 out of more than 1,000 passengers and 13 of 895 crew members contracted norovirus, leading to isolation measures and thorough disinfection of public areas.

According to the CDC, this was the second norovirus outbreak on the Coral Princess in 2024, following an earlier incident in January. The broader statistics for the cruise industry in the US show that 2024 experienced the highest number of stomach flu outbreaks on ships in over a decade, with 16 outbreaks recorded, including five in December alone that resulted in nearly 900 cases.

While cruise companies maintain stringent health and safety protocols, these developments underscore the importance of vigilance for passengers. Dr Burgess's water bottle safety tip and Dr Rubin's concerns about health inspections both reflect ongoing efforts by professionals to encourage preparedness and informed travel choices among cruise holidaymakers.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)