

World unprepared for global pandemic that could wipe out 80 million people in less than 36 hours, WHO report says

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The world is unprepared for a global pandemic that could wipe out 80 million people in less than 36 hours along with 5% of the global GDP, a new report from the World Health Organization says.

A rapidly spreading respiratory pathogen could pose a threat to a large portion of the global population, potentially devastating millions of

people across the globe—and the entire planet could be affected, the WHO's first Global Preparedness Monitoring Board report released this week said.

"If it is true to say 'what's past is prologue,' then there is a very real threat of a rapidly moving, highly lethal pandemic of a respiratory pathogen killing 50 (million) to 80 million people and wiping out nearly 5% of the world's economy. A global pandemic on that scale would be catastrophic, creating widespread havoc, instability and insecurity. The world is not prepared," Tuesday's report said.

The report encouraged the creation of systems that would effectively detect and control disease outbreaks, in a proactive move that would create global preparedness.

"For too long, we have allowed a cycle of panic and neglect when it comes to pandemics: we ramp up efforts when there is a serious threat, then quickly forget about them when the threat subsides. It is well past time to act," the report said.

Seven preventative actions were urged by the report, including: commitment and investing from heads of government; regional organizations leading by example; strong systems of preparedness in each countries; increased funding and financial incentives; and strengthened coordination systems from the United Nations.

While countries without basic health services and infrastructures are at risk for the greatest losses from a pandemic, all countries are vulnerable, the report said.

In the case that a global pandemic equivalent to the 1918 influenza pandemic—commonly known as the "Spanish flu"—occurred today, it would cost the around \$3 trillion, or nearly 5% of the [gross domestic](#)

[product](#), according to the World Bank's estimates.

"If a similar contagion occurred today with a population four times larger and travel times anywhere in the world less than 36 hours, 50-80 million people could perish. In addition to tragic levels of mortality, such a [pandemic](#) could cause panic, destabilize national security and seriously impact the global economy and trade," the report said.

Although advancements in science and technology have allowed for public health advancements, they also pose the potential for a microorganism to be engineered or recreated in labs—which could pose an outbreak if deliberately released, the report said, pushing for worldwide preparedness.

"The world is at risk. But, collectively, we already have the tools to save ourselves and our economies. What we need is leadership and the willingness to act forcefully and effectively," the report said.

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