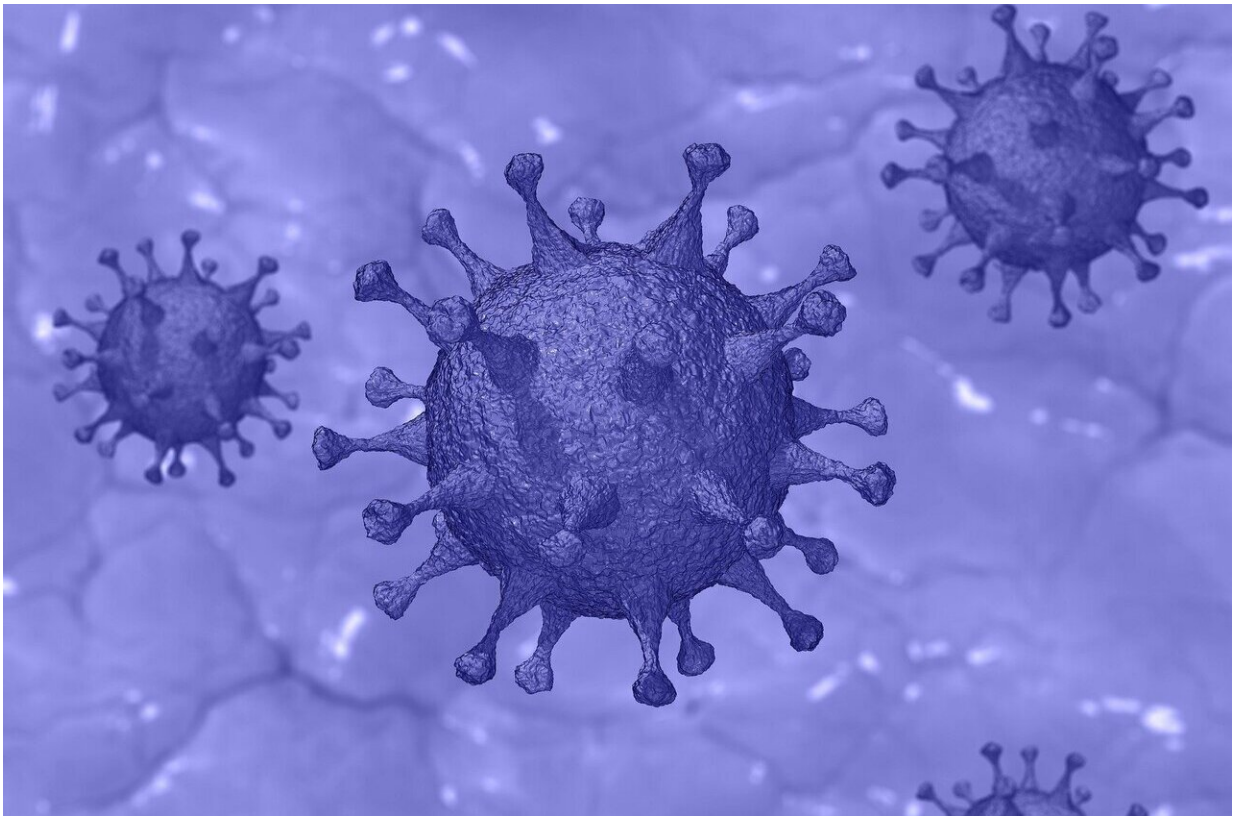


Virus death toll in Belgian retirement homes hits 10,000

December 18 2020



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The coronavirus pandemic has now killed more than 10,000 residents in Belgian retirement homes, more than half of the national death toll, health officials said Friday.

Belgium, a country of 11.5 million people, has counted 18,371 deaths from COVID-19 since the outbreak began, the highest per capita death rate in the world, according to an AFP tally.

Cases are rising again in Belgium after initially starting to decline after the re-imposition of a partial lockdown closed cafes and restaurants at the end of October, during a [second wave](#).

COVID taskforce spokesman Yves Van Lathem said the situation in retirement communities was "precarious and difficult" and that their residents and staff would be given priority when vaccinations start.

European Union members are expected to begin deploying vaccines on or after December 27 after the European Medicines Agency and the EU Commission approve the first candidate drug.

In Belgium, a true mass vaccination plan is not expected to get underway until January 4, however, after a symbolic operation in late December, informed sources told AFP.

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