

U.S. COVID hospitalizations pass last winter's peak

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(HealthDay)—The United States has passed another grim milestone in

the pandemic as the Omicron variant races across the country: COVID hospitalizations have now eclipsed a previous peak, which was seen last January.

There were 142,388 people hospitalized with [COVID-19](#) as of Sunday, more than the previous record of 142,315 hospitalizations reported on Jan. 14, 2021, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Meanwhile, the seven-day average of daily hospitalizations reached 132,086 by Sunday, an 83% increase from two weeks ago, *The New York Times* reported.

Hospitalization numbers include people who test positive for the coronavirus after being admitted for other conditions, so some patients may have been admitted for causes other than COVID-19, the *Times* noted. There is no [national database](#) showing the actual number of patients hospitalized specifically for COVID-19.

COVID-19 hospitalizations are now being driven in large part by people younger than 60: Daily COVID-19 admissions among people older than 60 remain lower than last winter.

Data in areas that first saw [Omicron surges](#) now show deaths spiking sharply—not as fast as case rates, but fast enough to hint at future devastation.

The surge in cases has overwhelmed hospitals nationwide, and about one-quarter face critical staffing shortages, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the *Times* reported.

Some states have deployed the National Guard to help, while others are having hospitals delay elective surgeries.

Nearly two years into the pandemic, "even the most dedicated individuals are going to be tired and worn out, if not burned out and dealing with [mental health issues](#) as a consequence," Dr. Mahshid Abir, an emergency physician at the University of Michigan who is a researcher at the RAND Corp., told the *Times*.

Doctors, nurses and other [medical staff](#) are also getting COVID, and while most are vaccinated and have not been hospitalized, they can't work. That leaves hospitals even more overwhelmed by coronavirus patients and less able to handle other emergencies like cancer surgeries, heart attacks, appendicitis and traumatic injuries, the *Times* reported.

In an unusual departure from prior rules, some [hospital](#) workers with coronavirus infections who have mild or no symptoms are continuing to work, the newspaper said.

"The demand is going up and the supply is going down, and that basically doesn't paint a good picture for people and communities—not just for COVID, but for everything else," Abir said.

More information: Visit the CDC for more on [severe COVID](#).

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