

# COVID comeback seen in parts of US as funding runs dry

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COVID is making its latest comeback in parts of the northeastern United States as the BA.2 coronavirus variant becomes dominant in the country, officials said Wednesday, while urging Congress to pass new funding or risk the supply of future treatments and vaccines.

The country is currently registering an average of 28,600 cases per day, down well below the last peak of more than 800,000 average daily infections, seen in January.

COVID-19 deaths are running at around 900 per day—with a total of one million deaths from the disease expected within about a month.

But Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) director Rochelle Walensky told reporters there were early signs of a new wave.

"We have seen a small increase in reported COVID-19 cases in New York state and New York City and some increases in people in hospital with COVID-19 in New England, specifically where the BA.2 variant has been reaching levels above 50 percent (prevalence)," she said.

Wastewater surveillance, an early warning measure of rising cases, also showed a modest uptick of the virus in some communities around the country, she added.

The BA.2 variant does not appear to cause more [severe disease](#) than the original Omicron, BA.1, nor does it seem more likely to evade [immune protection](#)—but it is more transmissible.

BA.2 currently accounts for 35 percent of cases nationally and is expected to become dominant soon.

The expected rebound comes as Congress declined to add \$22.5 billion in COVID funding to a spending bill passed last week

"At this stage, our resources are depleted," health secretary Xavier Becerra said.

"The fund Congress established to reimburse doctors and other medical

providers for COVID care for Americans, in particular the uninsured, is no longer accepting new claims for testing or treatment services as of yesterday."

On or around April 5, there is expected to be no money for new claims for vaccination services, he added.

Supplies of monoclonal antibody treatments to states were cut by 35 percent, and the treatments are expected to run out by May.

White House coronavirus response coordinator Jeff Zients added that in terms of vaccines, there was enough supply to give fourth doses to the immune compromised, and if authorized in coming weeks, to seniors.

"However, if the science shows that fourth doses are needed for the [general population](#) later this year, we will not have the supply necessary to ensure shots are available, free and easy to access for all Americans," he added.

That would also apply to new variant-specific vaccines that may be required, Zients said, and ran counter to the strategy of prudently purchasing new supply as several other countries, including Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines and Hong Kong have begun to do, he said.

"Further congressional inaction will set us back, leave us less prepared, and cost more lives," he said.

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