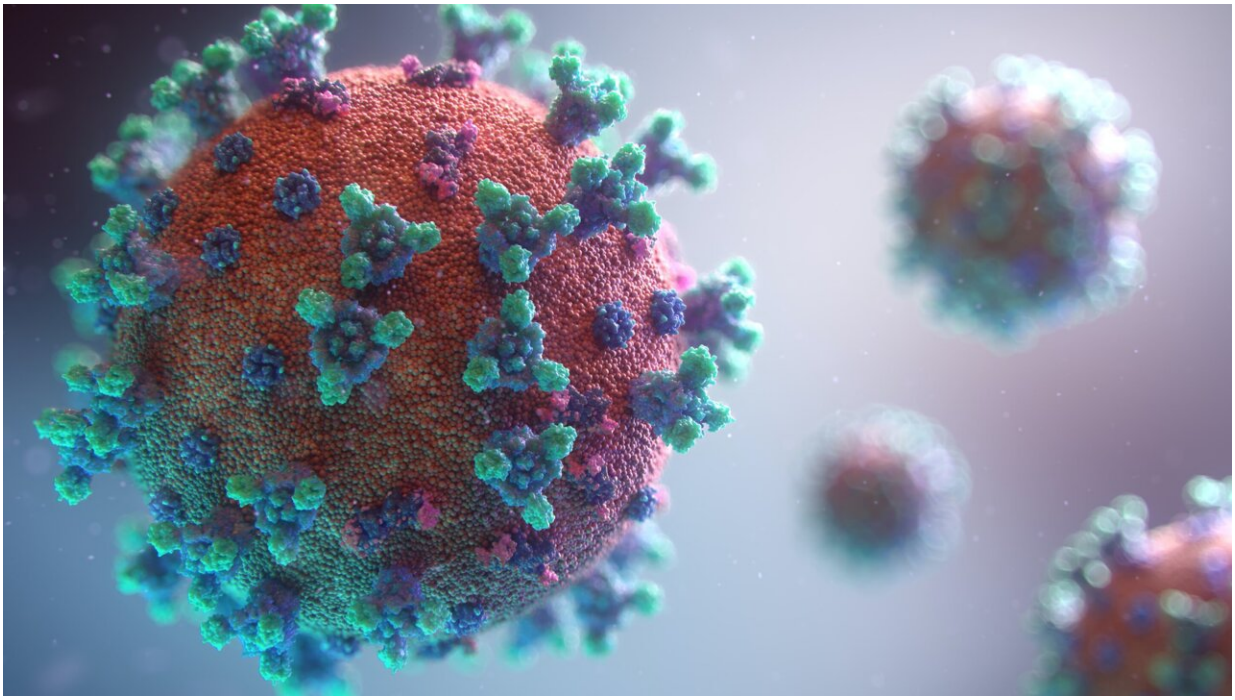
South Africa records zero COVID deaths, first time since May 2020

March 1 2022



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South Africa has recorded zero COVID-19 deaths in the last two days, for the first time since May 2020, health authorities said Tuesday.

COVID has hit South Africa harder than any other country on the continent, making the drop in deaths all the more remarkable.

The National Institute for Communicable Diseases made the announcement in its daily tally of coronavirus cases, sparking cautious optimism among health authorities.

The last time the country reported no deaths over a 48-hour timescale was on May 12, 2020.

"Empirically, the hospitals are pretty much empty of COVID cases," said Shabir Madhi, professor of vaccinology at the University of the Witwatersrand.

"We do know that reported deaths are underestimated by a factor of about three, but even then the rate at the moment is particularly low."

He attributed the decline in death to both the rollout of vaccines and to the impact of past waves of infection.

"It's come at a huge cost of loss of life, but it has resulted in a large portion of the population that have now developed protection against severe disease," Madhi said.

At least 80 percent of the populous province Gauteng has already been infected with COVID, a statistic he believed likely mirrors the entire country.

Zimbabwe, Namibia, Angola, Mozambique and Eswatini also reported no COVID deaths in the last 24 hours, although those neighbouring countries have less developed health surveillance system.

South Africa has suffered nearly 100,000 COVID deaths, and more than 3.6 million cases.

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