

# WHO: COVID-19 deaths rise, reversing a 5-week decline

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People wearing face masks stand in line as they wait for mass COVID-19 tests at a coronavirus testing site in Beijing, Thursday, June 16, 2022. Credit: AP Photo/Andy Wong

After five weeks of declining coronavirus deaths, the number of

fatalities reported globally increased by 4% last week, according to the World Health Organization.

In its weekly assessment of the pandemic issued on Thursday, the U.N. health agency said there were 8,700 COVID-19 deaths last week, with a 21% jump in the Americas and a 17% increase in the Western Pacific.

WHO said coronavirus cases continued to fall, with about 3.2 million new cases reported last week, extending a decline in COVID-19 infections since the peak in January. Still, there were significant spikes of infection in some regions, with the Middle East and Southeast Asia reporting increases of 58% and 33% respectively.

"Because many countries have reduced surveillance and testing, we know this number is under-reported," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said earlier this week. He said there was "no acceptable level of deaths from COVID-19," given that the [global community](#) now has the vaccines, medicines and diagnostics to stop the virus.

While many [rich countries](#) in Europe and North America have mostly dropped their virus restrictions, China's extreme COVID-19 policies have meant more mass testing, quarantines and sequestering of anyone who was in contact with a case.



Residents wear masks as they go about their day, Thursday, June 16, 2022, in Beijing. Authorities are trying to contain a new outbreak of COVID linked to a nightclub with mass COVID test and closure of restaurants and entertainment centers in the Chinese capital. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan

China's capital put school back online this week in one of its major districts amid a new COVID-19 outbreak linked to a nightclub. Residents in Beijing are still undergoing regular testing—mostly every other day—and must wear masks and swipe a mobile phone app to enter [public places](#) and facilitate case tracing.

China has maintained its "zero-COVID" policy despite considerable economic costs and an assertion from the head of the World Health Organization that the policy isn't sustainable.

This week, [U.S. officials](#) moved a step closer to authorizing coronavirus vaccines for the [youngest children](#), after the Food and Drug Administration's vaccine advisers gave a thumbs-up to vaccines from Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech for children under 5.

The outside experts voted unanimously that the benefits of the shots outweigh any risks for children under 5—that's roughly 18 million youngsters. They are the last age group in the U.S. without access to COVID-19 vaccines, and many parents have been anxious to protect their little children.

If all the regulatory steps are cleared, shots should be available next week.

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