

WHO: COVID-19 cases rise for the 5th week, deaths stable

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Nick Barragan wears a mask while running errands in Los Angeles on Wednesday, July 13, 2022. Los Angeles County is facing a return to a broad indoor mask requirement if current trends in hospital admissions continue, health officials said. Barragan said he's disappointed that the fast spread of COVID-19 could mean the return of a mandate, but he's used to wearing a mask because it's always been required for his job in film production. Credit: AP

Photo/Christopher Weber

The number of new coronavirus cases reported worldwide rose for the fifth week in a row while the number of deaths remained relatively stable, the World Health Organization reported Thursday.

In the U.N. health agency's weekly review of the COVID-19 pandemic, WHO said there were 5.7 million new infections confirmed last week, marking a 6% increase. There were 9,800 deaths, roughly similar to the previous week's figure.

Earlier this week, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the pandemic still qualifies as a global emergency and he was "concerned" about the recent spike.

"The [virus](#) is running freely, and countries are not effectively managing the disease burden," he said during a Tuesday press briefing. "New waves of the virus demonstrate again that COVID-19 is nowhere near over."

In the last two weeks, cases of COVID-19 reported to WHO surged 30%, driven largely by the hugely infectious omicron relatives, BA.4 and BA.5. The two omicron subvariants have shown a worrisome ability to re-infect people previously vaccinated or who have recovered from COVID.

According to WHO, the biggest increases in COVID-19 cases were seen in the Western Pacific and the Middle East, where they jumped by more than a quarter. Deaths spiked by 78% in the Middle East and by 23% in Southeast Asia, while dropping elsewhere or remaining stable.

WHO said that relaxed COVID-19 surveillance and testing programs in numerous countries have complicated efforts to track the virus and to catch any potentially dangerous new variants.

In the [U.S.](#), the new omicron variants have pushed up hospitalizations and deaths in recent weeks, prompting some cities and states to rethink their approaches. White House COVID-19 coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha, during a Wednesday TV appearance, called for booster shots and renewed vigilance against the virus.

The White House response team has also urged all adults 50 and older to urgently get a booster if they haven't yet this year—and dissuaded people from waiting for the next generation of shots expected in the fall.

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