

Time for COVID reality check after 1 mn deaths this year: WHO

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The World Health Organization's COVID chief said Friday it was time for a reality check on the virus after the millionth death from the disease this year.

Maria Van Kerkhove, the WHO's technical lead COVID-19, said the toll

was "heartbreaking" because the tests, treatments, vaccines and [public health measures](#) to control the disease were all available.

"Given we're in the third year of the pandemic, it's... all the more so tragic given that we have the tools that can actually prevent these deaths," she told a live interaction on the WHO's social media channels.

"A lot of us have become numb to the numbers.

"We need a reality check. We really need to take stock of where we are. We should not be in a position with 14,000 or 15,000 people dying every week. We just shouldn't."

Van Kerkhove insisted that the pandemic was not over, but it could be brought to an end while people continue to live their daily lives.

"We just need to put a little extra thought into that, of being a bit more careful," she said.

"A lot of people are talking about living with COVID. But we need to live with this responsibly.

"A million deaths this year is not living with COVID. Having 15,000 deaths per week is not living with COVID-19 responsibly."

Nearly 6.45 million deaths have been reported to the WHO since the [virus](#) was first detected in China in late 2019.

More than 5.3 million new cases were reported to the UN [health](#) agency last week.

"These are huge numbers, and that's an underestimate," said Van Kerkhove, with home testing not being reflected in surveillance data.

"We do see this virus circulating really intensely around the world.

"The virus is not going away, unfortunately."

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