

WHO: COVID cases drop everywhere, but pandemic not over

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A woman wearing a face mask sends a child to a primary school in Beijing, Wednesday, Sept. 7, 2022. China has stuck to its hard-line "zero-COVID" policy of compulsory testing, lockdowns, quarantines and masking despite advice from the World Health Organization and moves by most other countries to open up again since the virus was first detected in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019. Credit: AP Photo/Andy Wong

The number of new coronavirus cases fell everywhere in the world last week by about 12%, according to the World Health Organization's latest weekly review of the pandemic issued Wednesday.

The U.N. health agency reported that there were just under 4.2 million new infections last week and about 13,700 deaths—a 5% drop.

"This is very encouraging, but there is no guarantee these trends will persist," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus at a press briefing. "The most dangerous thing is to assume (that) they will," he said. He added that even though the number of weekly reported deaths have plummeted more than 80% since February, one person still dies with COVID-19 every 44 seconds and that most of those deaths are avoidable.

In its pandemic report, WHO said COVID-19 deaths dropped in Southeast Asia, Europe and the Middle East, but increased in Africa, the Americas and the Western Pacific.

Maria Van Kerkhove, WHO's technical lead on COVID-19, noted that the virus has not yet settled into a seasonal pattern and that its continued evolution will require [constant surveillance](#) and possible tweaks to diagnostics, treatments and vaccines.

Scientists warn the coronavirus will [linger far into the future](#), partly because it is getting better and better at getting around immunity from vaccination and past infection. Experts point to emerging research that suggests the latest omicron variant gaining ground in the U.S.—BA.4.6, which was responsible for around 8% of new U.S. infections last week—appears to be even better at evading the [immune system](#) than the dominant BA.5.



Students wearing face masks are accompanied by their relatives as they head to a primary school in Beijing, Wednesday, Sept. 7, 2022. China has stuck to its hard-line "zero-COVID" policy of compulsory testing, lockdowns, quarantines and masking despite advice from the World Health Organization and moves by most other countries to open up again since the virus was first detected in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019. Credit: AP Photo/Andy Wong

In China, authorities this week [locked down 65 million](#) of its citizens under tough COVID-19 restrictions and is discouraging domestic travel during upcoming national holidays.

Across the country, 33 cities including seven provincial capitals are under full or partial lockdown covering more than 65 million people, according to a tally published late Sunday by the Chinese business

magazine Caixin.

It said that outbreaks have been reported in 103 cities, the highest since the early days of the pandemic in early 2020.

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