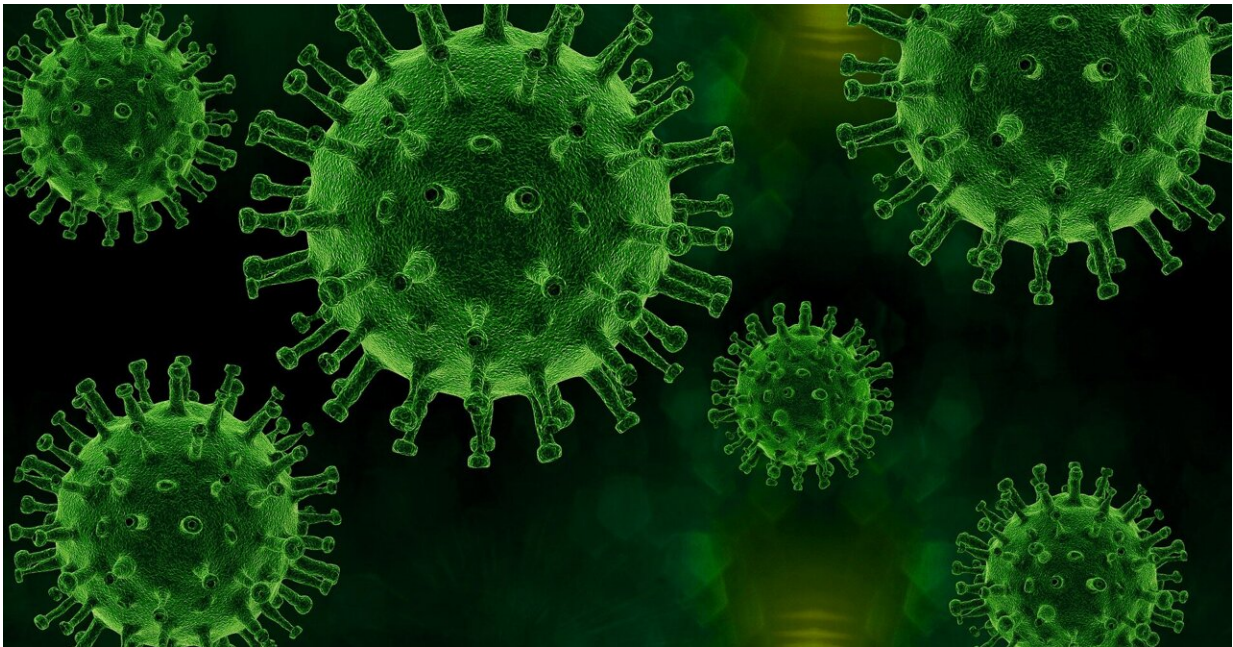


# WHO chief 'very concerned' about COVID situation in China

December 21 2022

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The head of the World Health Organization on Wednesday said he was "very concerned" about an unprecedented wave of COVID cases in China, as the health body urged Beijing to accelerate vaccination of the most vulnerable.

"WHO is very concerned over the evolving situation in China, with increasing reports of severe disease" Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told

a weekly news conference, appealing for detailed information on disease severity, hospital admissions and intensive care requirements.

"WHO is supporting China to focus its efforts on vaccinating people at the highest risk across the country, and we continue to offer our support for [clinical care](#) and protecting its [health](#) system", he added.

Since 2020, China has imposed strict health restrictions as part of a so-called "zero COVID" policy.

But the government ended most of those measures without notice in early December amid growing public exasperation and a significant impact on the economy.

The number of cases has since soared, raising fears of a high mortality rate among the elderly, who are particularly vulnerable.

Chinese authorities said on Tuesday that only those who had directly died of [respiratory failure](#) caused by the [virus](#) would now be counted under COVID death statistics.

The change in the criteria for recording virus deaths means most are no longer counted, and China said on Wednesday that not a single person had died of COVID-19 the previous day.

WHO emergencies chief Michael Ryan stressed the need for more vaccinations: "We've been saying this for weeks that this highly infectious virus was always going to be very hard to stop completely, with just public health and social measures".

"And most countries have really transitioned to a mixed strategy".

"Vaccination is the exit strategy in that sense from the impact of a wave

of Omicron", the prevalent COVID variant.

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