

Czech whooping cough spread accelerates, three dead

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The Czech Republic has been hit by a soaring number of whooping cases and the fast growing outbreak has killed three people, health authorities said on Monday.

The country of 10.9 million people has registered 7,888 cases of the respiratory illness this year, said the State Institute of Public Health.

Last week, health authorities registered 1,494 new cases, the fastest weekly growth this year. Some 183 are in hospital.

The spread is the worst since 1959 when [vaccinations](#) started, official health records have shown.

Vaccination is mandatory in the Czech Republic, but it is not for life and some people refuse.

Teenagers are the worst-hit age group as parents often ignore the recommended revaccination at the age of 10-11 years, chief public health officer Pavla Svrcinova said.

"Of the total number, 5,808 people were vaccinated," the state institute said on its website.

Three people with the disease have died this year: a 62-year-old man, an 84-year-old woman and a newborn. All had other health issues too.

The spread goes against the previous expectations of health authorities, who last month had believed the number of cases was peaking.

The disease has been on the rise in other European countries as well as in China with global [health authorities](#) blaming the COVID pandemic.

The European Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) said last month that whooping cough was "an endemic disease worldwide" with peaks every three to five years.

"The current increase is potentially linked to lower circulation during

COVID-19 pandemic, combined with suboptimal vaccination uptake in certain groups during the COVID-19 pandemic," it added.

Kate O'Brien, head of vaccines and immunization at the World Health Organization, said last year that falling vaccination rates for diseases such as whooping cough, measles and polio "set the stage for other serious vaccine-preventable diseases to reemerge".

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