COVID-19 is still killing around 1,700 people a week around the world, the World Health Organization said Thursday, as it urged at-risk populations to keep up with their vaccinations against the disease.

WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus sounded a warning on declining vaccine coverage.
Despite the continued death toll, "data show that vaccine coverage has declined among health workers and people over 60, which are two of the most at-risk groups," the UN health agency's chief told a press conference.

"WHO recommends that people in the highest-risk groups receive a COVID-19 vaccine within 12 months of their last dose."

More than seven million COVID deaths have been reported to the WHO, though the true toll of the pandemic is thought to be far higher.

COVID-19 also shredded economies and crippled health systems.

Tedros declared an end to COVID-19 as an international public health emergency in May 2023, more than three years on from when the virus was first detected in Wuhan, China, in late 2019.

The WHO has urged governments to maintain virus surveillance and sequencing, and to ensure access to affordable and reliable tests, treatments and vaccines.

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