

# THE SARS-COV-2 VIRUS IS HERE TO STAY, AND COUNTRIES NEED TO MANAGE IT ALONGSIDE OTHER INFECTIOUS DISEASES: WHO

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Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus | Photo Credit: Reuters

The SARS-CoV-2 virus is here to stay, and countries need to manage it alongside other infectious diseases, said the World Health Organisation (WHO) issuing an updated 'COVID-19 Global Strategic Preparedness, Readiness and Response Plan (SPRP) 2023-2025' earlier this week.

The update comes at a time when the WHO is slated to assess whether the [COVID pandemic is still a public health emergency](#) of international concern.

The latest update is WHO's fourth strategic plan for COVID-19. The document is a guide for countries on how to manage COVID-19 over the next two years in the transition from an emergency phase to a longer-term, sustained response.

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In its 20-page document WHO states that as the COVID-19 pandemic enters its fourth year, surveillance has declined dramatically. "While weekly reported cases and deaths are at the lowest level since the pandemic began, millions continue to be infected or re-infected with SARS-CoV-2 and thousands of people are dying each week. The updated two-year strategy builds on the objectives of the 2022 SPRP and supports countries as they are working to transition their critical emergency response activities to longer-term sustained COVID-19 disease prevention, control and management," it noted.

It added that the underlying goal of SPRP is to end the emergency phase of the COVID-19 pandemic in all countries and shift from emergency response to sustainable comprehensive management of COVID-19 within broader disease prevention and control programmes. WHO has suggested reducing and controlling the incidence of SARS-CoV-2 variants with increased growth rates and immune escape, with a particular focus on reducing infections in high-risk and vulnerable populations; preventing, diagnosing and treating COVID-19 to reduce mortality, morbidity, and long-term sequelae; and supporting member states' transition from crisis

response to sustainable, integrated, longer-term and strengthened COVID-19 disease management.

“While COVID is showing no signs of becoming seasonal like flu, it is likely to keep evolving & causing surges of infection, at different times in different countries. Our underlying immunity will hopefully continue to protect against severe disease,” tweeted Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, former chief scientist of WHO.

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