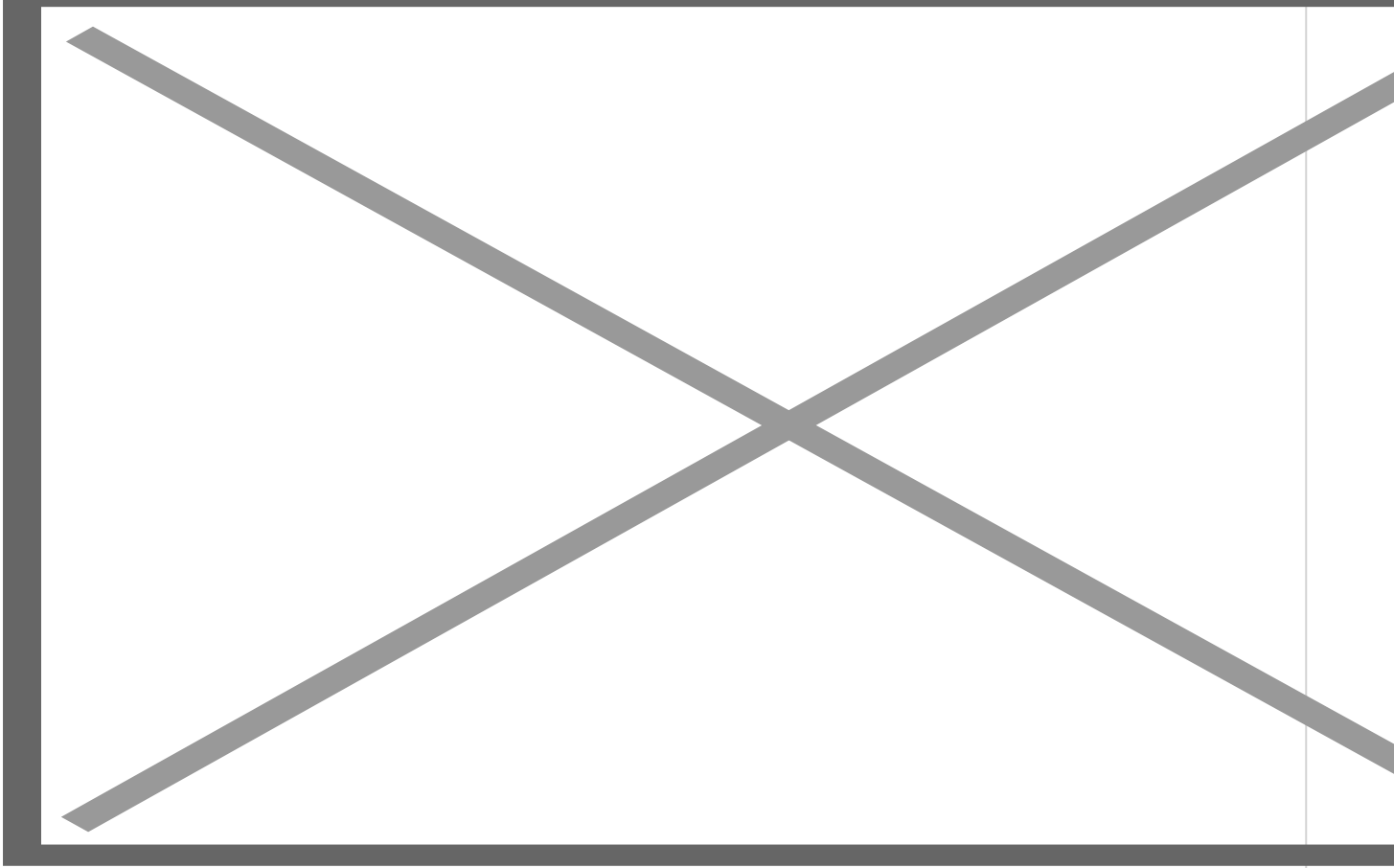


WHO warns Europe is reaching highest COVID cases since the start of pandemic

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Geneva, November 13 (RHC)-- Europe has once again become the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a high jump in new deaths compared to the last week, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

Europe reported almost two million new COVID-19 infections last week, the largest weekly case count in the continent since the start of the pandemic, the WHO Director General, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said at a press conference in Geneva, Switzerland, on Friday.

While other regions showed decreasing trends, Europe's 27,000 new death cases marked a 10 percent weekly jump, a figure that represents more than half of the world's Covid-related deaths last week.

From 61 countries in the European continent, 26 countries reported increases of ten percent or more in the number of new cases in the past week, with the highest numbers coming from Bulgaria, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Romania.

According to the WHO, some countries in Western Europe where vaccination rates had reached a high level still saw a surge in cases, which shows that vaccines cannot replace other epidemic prevention measures or completely prevent the spread of the virus.

The WHO recommended that countries take response measures based on their actual conditions. "We continue to recommend the tailored and proportionate use of testing, masks, physical distancing, measures to prevent crowding, improved ventilation, and more. And get vaccinated when it's your turn. Every country must constantly assess its situation and adjust its approach accordingly," Tedros said.

"It's another reminder, as we have said again and again, that vaccines do not replace the need for other COVID-19 precautions," Dr. Tedros said. "Vaccines reduce the risk of hospitalization, severe disease and death. But they do not fully prevent coronavirus transmission."

Michael Ryan, Executive Director of the WHO's Health Emergencies Program, noted that the surge in cases in Europe was occurring as temperatures were dropping and people were moving back inside with the perception that the pandemic was nearing the end.

What is happening in Europe despite the availability of vaccines is "a warning shot for the world," Ryan said, "We all have to double down and recommit ourselves to doing everything we can to be the last person in the chain of transmission."

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