

Worst case scenario for coronavirus: 200,000 to 1.7 million US deaths

Officials at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and epidemic experts from universities around the world conferred last month about what might happen if the new [coronavirus](#) gained a foothold in the United States. How many people might die? How many would be infected and need hospitalization?

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Between 160 million and 214 million people in the United States could be infected over the course of the epidemic, according to a projection that encompasses the range of the four scenarios. That could last months or even over a year, with infections concentrated in shorter periods, staggered across time in different communities, experts said. As many as 200,000 to 1.7 million people could die.

And, the calculations based on the C.D.C.'s scenarios suggested, 2.4 million to 21 million people in the United States could require hospitalization, potentially crushing the nation's medical system, which has [only about 925,000 staffed hospital beds](#). Fewer than a tenth of those are for people who are critically ill.

The assumptions fueling those scenarios are mitigated by the fact that cities, states, businesses and individuals are beginning to take steps to slow transmission, even if some are acting less aggressively than others.

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