

What can stop COVID? How do pandemics end?

The promise of a vaccine for COVID-19 is inching closer to reality, with some [candidate vaccines](#) already approaching the last big hurdle in the clinical trial process. There's also [multiple treatments](#) for the disease being trialled and refined.

But it's not like a switch will flip and the pandemic will end the moment a vaccine is available, [virologist Kristy] Short says.

"There's not going to come a day where we say, 'OK, on [this date], this will no longer be a problem'. It's going to be a continuum," Dr Short says.

"What we should eventually see is that once we get vaccines out, the number of cases will go down. On top of that, therapies will improve and the mortality rate will go down.

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And even with the best therapies and vaccines in the world, this virus is almost certainly going to be with us forever, even after the pandemic phase has passed.

"To eliminate a virus from the human population is incredibly difficult. We've only ever done it with one human pathogen, and that's smallpox," Dr Short says.

"To do that, you need a global vaccination strategy. On top of that, you need a vaccine that provides essentially 100 per cent protection against the virus and against any mutations the virus might throw up. And no animal reservoir. That's a pretty tall order."

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