

Worse than COVID-19? Why the next virus might be a lot more dangerous

Since the first reports of the coronavirus began circulating nearly a year ago, the WHO has repeatedly warned that the world must prepare for even deadlier pandemics in the future.

“This pandemic has been very severe,” [[WHO emergencies chief Mike Ryan said December 27](#)]. “It has affected every corner of this planet. But this is not necessarily the big one.”

The coronavirus, he said, should serve as a “wake-up call.”

“These threats will continue,” he said. “One thing we need to take from this pandemic, with all of the tragedy and loss, is we need to get our act together.”

After the coronavirus emerged in China late last year, 2020 is coming to an end amid the [rollout of new coronavirus vaccines](#). But case numbers are rising in some places, and public health experts are warning about a highly transmissible variant of the virus first detected in Britain in September and since documented in more than 20 countries.

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The mass rollout of vaccines offers hope that the virus could be brought under control, at least in some parts of the world, in the months ahead. But experts say the coronavirus will be around for a long time, and the next pandemic is a question of when, not if.

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