

When can we declare the COVID pandemic officially over?

Pandemics do eventually end, even if [omicron](#) is complicating the question of when this one will. But it won't be like flipping a light switch: The [world](#) will have to learn to coexist with a virus that's not going away.

The ultra-contagious omicron mutant is pushing cases to all-time highs and causing chaos as an exhausted world struggles, again, to stem the spread. But this time, we're not starting from scratch.

[Vaccines](#) offer strong protection from serious illness, even if they don't always prevent a mild infection. Omicron doesn't appear to be as deadly as some earlier variants.

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The newest variant is a warning about what will continue to happen “unless we really get serious about the endgame,” said Dr. Albert Ko, an infectious disease specialist at the Yale School of Public Health.

“Certainly COVID will be with us forever,” Ko added. “We're never going to be able to eradicate or eliminate COVID, so we have to identify our goals.”

At some point, the World Health Organization will determine when enough countries have tamped down their COVID-19 cases sufficiently — or at least, hospitalizations and deaths — to declare the pandemic officially over. Exactly what that threshold will be isn't clear.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.**](#)