

WHO hopes end to pandemic in 'less than two years'

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The World Health Organization said Friday it hopes the planet will be rid of the coronavirus pandemic in less than two years—faster than it took for the Spanish flu.

"We hope to finish this pandemic before less than two years," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters from the WHO's headquarters in Geneva, insisting that it should be possible to tame the novel coronavirus faster than the deadly 1918 pandemic.

Compared to back then, the world today is at a disadvantage due to its "globalisation, closeness, connectedness", which has allowed the novel coronavirus to spread around the world at lightning speed, Tedros acknowledged.

But the world also now has the advantage of far better technology, he said.

By "utilising the [available tools](#) to the maximum and hoping that we can have additional tools like vaccines, I think we can finish it in a shorter time than the 1918 flu."

The COVID-19 pandemic has to date killed nearly 800,000 people and infected close to 23 million worldwide, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP.

But the deadliest pandemic in [modern history](#), Spanish flu, killed as many as 50 million victims and infected around 500 million around the world between February 1918 and April 2020.

Five times more people died of it than did in World War I. The first victims were recorded in the United States, before it spread to Europe and then around the world.

That pandemic came in three waves, with the deadliest second wave beginning in the latter half of 1918.

"It took three waves for the disease to infect most of the susceptible individuals," WHO emergencies chief Michael Ryan told journalists.

After that, the flu virus behind the pandemic evolved into a far less deadly seasonal bug, which returned for decades.

"Very often, a [pandemic virus](#) settles into a seasonal pattern over time," Ryan said.

He warned though that so far, "this virus is not displaying a similar wave-like pattern. Clearly, when the disease is not under control, it jumps straight back up."

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