
WHO chiefs give desperate warning to world's youth about Covid-19

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Though coronavirus has disproportionately affected the elderly and infirm, the chief of the World Health Organization (WHO) Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has issued a stark warning to younger generations: "You are not invincible."

"Data from many countries clearly show that people under 50 make up a significant proportion of patients requiring hospitalization," the agency's director-general said at a press briefing on Friday.

He then urged young people directly to take the threat of Covid-19 seriously: "This coronavirus could put you in hospital for weeks, or even kill you."

Tedros added that even if younger people show mild or even no symptoms after contracting the virus, "the choices you make about where you go could be the difference between life and death for someone else."

His WHO colleague Michael Ryan emphasized the point by insisting people should not consider anything about the viral outbreak as 'normal.'

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The Covid-19 pandemic has infected more than 265,000 people worldwide, killing more than 11,000. Patients over the age of 64 are more than five times as likely to die, according to a research paper published this week.

However, as the virus has spread beyond China and into Europe and North America, young people are being hospitalized in increasing numbers. In the US, analysis by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that 40 percent of patients who end up in American hospitals with the illness are between 20 and 54 years old.

Doctors in Italy – where deaths from the virus recently overtook those in China – have also warned younger people about the risk of serious illness.

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"Fifty percent of our patients in the intensive care unit, which are the most severe patients, are over 65 years old," Dr. Antonio Pesenti told Sky News. "But that means that the other 50 percent of our patients are younger than 65. We have patients who are 20 years old or 30 years old, quite a few, and those are severe like the old ones."
