

# Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

## 2nd Feb 2021

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### Isolation Tips

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#### **Home workouts: Why you should reconsider your fitness goals this lockdown**

In the UK, a survey's found that two fifths of us are doing less exercise in this lockdown compared to the first one in Spring 2020. "If you cast your mind back to April, it was pretty beautiful every day, whereas now there are less daylight hours," Dr Ian Taylor says. He's a psychologist at Loughborough University and specialises in what motivates us when it comes to sport and exercise. Ian says there are a few things you can do to try and get into a positive mindset about exercise and make it seem a lot less daunting. "Remove barriers as you'll be surprised how many of them mount up against your motivation," he says. "Going for a walk is very easy because you don't need to change your clothes or move furniture out the way for example, or worry about your [gym] kit being spread all over the house".

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-55863691>

#### **No gym required: How seniors can exercise during lockdown**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it's crucial for homebound older adults to find safe and effective ways to exercise, an expert says. At-home workouts can help strengthen muscles, improve balance, increase blood flow to the heart, boost the immune system and reduce stress, according to Summer Cook, an associate professor of kinesiology and an expert on senior fitness at the University of New Hampshire, in Durham.

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-02-gym-required-seniors-lockdown.html>

### Hygiene Helpers

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#### **Covid: Lockdown easing must happen 'very slowly', adviser says**

Ending the current coronavirus lockdown must happen "very slowly, very cautiously", Public Health England's Covid strategy chief has said. Dr Susan Hopkins said the focus should be on getting people vaccinated and preventing another wave of infections. She told the BBC's Andrew Marr: "I hope that this summer will be similar to last summer... and that will allow us to do things that feel more normal." Meanwhile, Matt Hancock predicted "a happy and free Great British summer". But the health secretary warned of a "a tough few months" as national restrictions continue across the UK while vaccinations are administered. "We have to follow the data, we have to see the impact of the vaccine on the ground. It's a difficult balance: we've got to move as fast as we can but in such a way that keeps people safe," he told BBC Politics East.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-55878450>

#### **Many who have received the coronavirus vaccine wonder: What can I safely do?**

Soon after Marc Wilson gets his second dose of coronavirus vaccine, he plans to resume one of his pre-pandemic joys: swimming laps with his friends. But most other activities — including volunteering at a food pantry and homeless shelter — will be off-limits until the outbreak is curbed and scientists know more about the threat of emerging variants. "I can definitely broaden the things I do, but I still have to be quite cautious," said Wilson, 70, a retired accountant in Norman, Okla., who has diabetes and other health problems. "When your doctor tells you, 'If you get covid, you're dead,' that gets your attention real good."

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/02/01/vaccinated-people-precautions/>

### **Everyone entering care homes should be tested for Covid-19, report urges**

Everyone entering care homes should be tested for Covid-19, a report has recommended. Care home workers should be tested every day and those moving between homes should be tested before entry to every home, a report by the Stormont Health Committee has also urged. The report was published on Monday following a committee inquiry into coronavirus in care homes across Northern Ireland. It heard that about 40% of those who died with coronavirus in Northern Ireland last year were care home residents, according to Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency figures. As of October 2020 there were 16,110 registered care home beds across 434 independent homes and 48 that are publicly owned and operated.

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/everyone-entering-care-homes-should-be-tested-for-covid-19-report-urges-40036794.html>

### **Covid: Door-to-door testing to be introduced across parts of England in response to South Africa variant**

Some 80,000 people across England are being encouraged to come forward for “surge” testing, regardless of whether they have symptoms, as part of efforts to contain the growing spread of the South African coronavirus variant. A total of 105 cases in the UK have so far been attributed to the new variant – 11 of which were recently found to be community-based and not linked to people who had travelled to South Africa, suggesting the virus is now circulating among local populations. These infections were detected in eight different English postcodes: in Hanwell, Tottenham and Mitcham in London; Walsall in the West Midlands; Broxbourne, Hertfordshire; Maidstone, Kent; Woking, Surrey; and Southport, Merseyside.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/covid-south-africa-variant-testing-uk-b1795727.html>

### **Fauci: Covid Vaccines Are Less Effective Against New Strains — But Still Worth Taking**

Even though new strains of the coronavirus have dented some vaccines’ effectiveness, existing vaccines can still prevent serious illness and slow the virus’ spread, White House medical advisor Dr. Anthony Fauci said Monday, responding to fears that the coronavirus will become more contagious and less susceptible to vaccines as it mutates. “Even when you have a variant circulating in which you may not have a 95% efficacy to prevent infection, it is very important that you might very very positively prevent serious illness and serious disease,” Fauci said. “You need to get vaccinated when it becomes available, as quickly and as expeditiously as possible throughout the country.”

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/joewalsh/2021/02/01/fauci-covid-vaccines-are-less-effective-against-new-strains---but-still-worth-taking/>

### **Coronavirus vaccine would have to be 85 percent effective to stop a surge in deaths**

Social distancing may remain in place until the end of the year - while coronavirus vaccines would have to be 85 per cent effective to prevent a surge in deaths if restrictions were totally relaxed, scientists warned today. Modelling passed to Downing Street warns that the UK could see a large spike in deaths if inoculation fails to significantly cut transmission. A paper commissioned by SAGE subgroup SPI-M and produced by modellers at the University of Warwick showed a 'high uptake' was also vital to get the country back to normal without risking a third wave of Covid cases.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9205917/Coronavirus-vaccine-85-percent-effective-stop-surge-deaths.html>

### **Use of masks by Japanese news anchors sparks debate among public and industry**

The use of masks by television personalities and news anchors on camera is sparking a debate among the public and within the entertainment industry in Japan after broadcasters on a major network began wearing them during a program. TV Tokyo Corp. began having its anchors wear masks from Jan. 18. After anchor Mariko Oe asked viewers for feedback, the network received over 1,000 comments, of which approximately 80% saw the move in a favorable light. Some of those who disliked the use of masks on camera remarked it was difficult to make out the anchor’s facial

expressions. The network is planning to start using subtitles after viewers with hearing difficulties said the masks meant they were unable to lip-read.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/01/30/national/masks-japanese-news-anchors/>

## **Community Activities**

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### **COVID-19: Every care home resident in England has been offered a coronavirus jab**

Every care home resident in England has been offered a COVID-19 jab, the NHS has confirmed, just hours after a new record was set for vaccinations in the UK. Older people living in more than 10,000 care homes across England have either been vaccinated or offered the jab and those forced to wait because of an outbreak of the virus will be treated as soon as possible, health professionals said.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-every-care-home-resident-in-england-has-been-offered-a-coronavirus-jab-12204997>

### **Over 80% of Northern Ireland people will take the coronavirus vaccine**

The vast majority of people in Northern Ireland will accept the Covid-19 vaccine when offered - but a hefty minority will not or are still unsure, the new LucidTalk poll has indicated. More than 80% of the population here will definitely get the jabs, 7% said they will not, and 10% do not know, are unsure or have no opinion. The percentage of vaccine supporters is similar to the UK as a whole and also the Republic of Ireland, but it is much higher than some other European countries.

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/over-80-of-ni-people-will-take-the-coronavirus-vaccine-40033921.html>

### **More than HALF of Americans say they'll delay getting coronavirus vaccine or REFUSE it altogether**

Only 41 per cent of people surveyed said they are happy to be vaccinated now 13 per cent will refuse vaccinations while 31 per cent want to 'wait and see.' Survey also found divisions on political, racial and economic lines in the US. Many are reluctant to get the shots because of myths spread by anti-vaxxers. President Biden plans to roll out 100million doses in 100 days in office

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9209383/More-HALF-Americans-say-theyll-delay-getting-coronavirus-vaccine-REFUSE-altogether.html>

### **Covid-19: Volunteers step forward as vaccination taxis**

With the Covid-19 vaccination rollout in full swing, people are stepping forward to volunteer to take people for their jabs. But this service can be more than just a car journey, a connection is being made with some of the most vulnerable in our communities. Carolyn Carter, 56, chairwoman of Chippenham Link Transport in Wiltshire, regularly drives clients to their medical appointments and is now helping with vaccination runs. She said: "I thought long and hard about doing it, but...I can do good by doing this. "Wednesday we were all just backwards and forwards to the surgery. Between the 11 of us we did about 40 trips over two days. "Everyone has been fantastic. They are just helping with whatever they can to get this done."

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-55827124>

### **'We've had enough': In France, Spain and Denmark, anti-lockdown protests continue**

Marches to denounce COVID-19 restrictions put in place by various governments have been taking place in cities across Europe. An authorized protest in support of culture workers quickly turned into a rave in the centre of Perpignan on Saturday, with about 200 maskless party-goers at the height of the demonstration. The open-air disco, which even had a sound system installed on a podium, was over by the early evening. The group "Men in Black" chanted "Freedom for Denmark. We've had enough," as they protested in Aarhus.

<https://www.euronews.com/2021/01/31/we-ve-had-enough-in-france-spain-and-denmark-anti-lockdown-protests-continue>

### **Japan's super-spreader weekends**

Recent COVID-19 cases in Japan have shot up sharply, leading to another round of partial lockdowns, but reported cases appear subdued compared to the United States or Europe. Total cases in the United States have surpassed 23,000,000 cumulative while the cumulative number for Japan passed 315,000 cases. That is 69 cases per 1,000 people in the United States compared with two cases per 1,000 in Japan. If Japan had the same ratio of cases per 1,000 people as the United States, Japan would have more than 8,700,000 cases. That approximates the population of metropolitan Tokyo. If the United States had the same ratio of cases per 1,000 people as Japan, the number of cases would be under 660,000. That is about the population of Oklahoma City. Much has been researched and written about this disparity, but we will probably not learn of meaningful factors that can explain it for several more years.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2021/01/31/commentary/japan-commentary/japans-superspreader-weekends-covid-19/>

### **Italians flock back to coffee bars as COVID-19 restrictions eased**

The familiar tinkling of ceramic cups and chatter returned to coffee bars across most of Italy on Monday, as rigid COVID-19 restrictions were eased. After severe curbs over the Christmas and New Year period, two-thirds of Italy was declared a “yellow zone” allowing bars in those less risky areas to serve customers at counters and tables again instead of offering only take-away in plastic cups. The Health Ministry eased restrictions in 15 of Italy’s 20 regions, as the number of people infected continued to fall. Five regions remain red zones and travelling between regions of any colour remains prohibited until mid-February.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-italy-reopen/italians-flock-back-to-coffee-bars-as-covid-19-restrictions-eased-idUSKBN2A12FX>

### **Mumbai's suburban train services restored after 11 months**

One of the world’s busiest urban rail systems situated in India’s financial capital Mumbai was restarted for all commuters on Monday, 11 months after it was shut down to prevent the spread of coronavirus infection in the city. An average of eight million people were using the train services daily before the pandemic. Operations were stopped in March last year, as part of a strict lockdown imposed by the government. On Monday, commuters trickled into still empty train coaches, wearing masks and armed with sanitisers.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-india-trains/mumbais-suburban-train-services-restored-after-11-months-idUSKBN2A11WL?il=0>

### **Britain's centenarian fundraiser Captain Tom in hospital with COVID-19**

British centenarian Captain Tom Moore, who raised millions of pounds for the health service by walking laps of his garden in last year’s lockdown, has been admitted to hospital after testing positive for COVID-19, his daughter said on Sunday. The World War Two veteran caught the public’s imagination in April, just before his 100th birthday, when he was filmed doing laps with the help of a walking frame around his garden in the village of Marston Moretaine, north of London. He hoped to raise 1,000 pounds. Instead, he raised more than 30 million (\$41 million) for the National Health Service, broke two Guinness world records, was knighted by Queen Elizabeth, scored a No. 1 single, wrote an autobiography and helped set up a charity.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-britain-captaintom/britains-centenarian-fundraiser-captain-tom-in-hospital-with-covid-19-idUSKBN2A00P8>

### **Couple starts Facebook page that helps thousands of older people get COVID-19 vaccinations**

When Russ Schwartz and Katherine Quirk saw that COVID-19 vaccine appointments were going to be distributed online, they immediately thought of their own parents and the senior citizen residents of

the South Florida town they call home. "Knowing that seniors were the first group it was going to roll out to, we started to think about the challenges that they might face trying to navigate how all of the information would come through," said Quirk, a pediatric hematology and oncology nurse. Quirk and Schwartz, an elementary school principal, had the idea to start a Facebook group to share information about how to sign up for COVID-19 vaccine appointments. One month later, their Facebook group, South Florida COVID-19 Vaccination Info, has nearly 20,000 members and has helped thousands of people get appointments for COVID-19 vaccines.

[https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/wellness/story/couple-starts-facebook-page-helps-thousands-older-people-75545996?cid=social\\_twitter\\_abcp](https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/wellness/story/couple-starts-facebook-page-helps-thousands-older-people-75545996?cid=social_twitter_abcp)

## **Working Remotely**

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### **The Remote-Work Revolution Will Be Bigger Than We Think**

Last year, I wrote about how even a modest remote-work revolution—no more than 10 percent of Americans working remotely full time after the pandemic is over—could affect the U.S. labor force (e.g.: fewer hotel workers) and party politics (e.g.: more southern Democrats). But the more I researched remote work and spoke with experts, the more I realized I had only scratched the surface of its implications for the future of the economy, the geography of opportunity, and the fate of innovation. Here are four more predictions.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/02/remote-work-revolution/617842/>

### **If kids are learning remotely, parents are working less than full-time**

Parents of remote learners are far less likely to work full-time compared to parents of children attending in-person school. That's according to the Franklin Templeton-Gallup Economics of Recovery Study, which shed light on children's learning arrangements during the Covid-19 pandemic and their parents' employment status. The Templeton-Gallup data suggest parents have had to adjust their working hours or employment based on whether or not their children have been able to return to school buildings. Just 47% of parents of children learning entirely remotely or in hybrid scenarios are employed full-time, compared to 71% of parents of children who are learning in-school entirely.

<https://www.bizjournals.com/bizwomen/news/latest-news/2021/02/if-kids-are-learning-remotely-parents-are-working.html?page=all>

### **The Future Of Mental Health And Career Support For Remote Workers**

The future of work has changed for all of us in both positive and negative ways. A new study by Stoneside surveyed over 1,000 remote employees to learn what companies are doing to help with morale for those working from home. Overall, employees, felt good about their company's culture prior to the pandemic with 77.7% saying they would characterize the culture as positive, although Covid-19 had an impact on work situations. People who primarily worked in person prior to the pandemic were over three times more likely than those who were already working remotely to say company culture was worse since the health crisis began. Nearly 92% of people already accustomed to remote work said company culture had either stayed the same or gotten better. The pandemic likely didn't shake up their work routine as much as it did for employees who had to adjust to working from home.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/bryanrobinson/2021/02/01/the-future-of-mental-health-and-career-support-for-remote-workers/>

## **Virtual Classrooms**

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### **Ontario elementary school teacher on the highs and lows of virtual learning**

In January, schools in Ontario moved to online learning in a bid to slow the spread of COVID-19. Schools in the northern part of the province reopened on Jan. 11, and several more regions will reopen classrooms starting Monday, Feb. 1. Schools in four regions with high numbers of COVID-19

cases, including Toronto and Hamilton, will remain virtual until at least Feb. 10. For elementary school teacher Michelle Davis, the most challenging part of teaching children online isn't the hours of preparation or the new computer programs — it's being a voice of calm for her students. Though most of the work they do is online, Davis is constantly giving her students breaks away from the computer. She encourages them to dance, stretch and even go on scavenger hunts.

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/day6/the-meaning-of-gamestop-teaching-grade-1-online-watching-groundhog-day-in-2021-gandhi-s-assassin-more-1.5892603/ontario-elementary-school-teacher-on-the-highs-and-lows-of-virtual-learning-1.5892610>

### **Kenya: Majority of Universities Not Fit to Offer Virtual Learning**

In Kenya, a majority of universities have not complied with accreditation requirements for their virtual learning programmes despite a mandatory stipulation that they acquire new accreditation before offering the courses through blended learning or via e-learning. The new regulations by the Commission for University Education (CUE), the professional body mandated by the Ministry of Education to inspect the quality of university programmes before accrediting them for teaching by the institutions of higher learning in Kenya, aim to ensure that universities offer high quality education institutions around the world shift to virtual learning in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. A preliminary report by the commission shows that most universities, especially the public ones, lack the relevant infrastructure and digital material to support blended learning.

<https://allafrica.com/stories/202102010556.html>

### **FETC 2021: Rebuilding Learning Beyond the Classroom**

The shift to remote and hybrid learning environments has not been easy for educators to manage. That's especially the case when their lessons lean heavily on interactive learning approaches. This is a particular challenge for STEM-based educators, who often rely on hands-on learning approaches. Despite this, many have found a way. In a Tuesday session at the 2021 Future of Education Technology Conference, educators highlighted ways that they have been keeping their students on track despite all the changes.

<https://edtechmagazine.com/k12/article/2021/02/fetc-2021-rebuilding-learning-beyond-classroom>

## **Public Policies**

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### **Coronavirus in Scotland: Over 575,000 people have had first dose of vaccine, says Nicola Sturgeon**

Nicola Sturgeon has said over 575,000 people have had first dose of the coronavirus vaccine in Scotland. Speaking at the Scottish Government daily coronavirus briefing on Monday, the First Minister added this included 98% of those living in care homes for older people, and 88% of staff in these homes. Ms Sturgeon also said that vaccinations for the over-70s have begun - with two mass vaccination centres opening in Edinburgh and Aberdeen. Already 14% of the over-75s have been vaccinated.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/health/medical/coronavirus-in-scotland-over-575000-people-have-had-first-dose-of-vaccine-says-nicola-sturgeon/ar-BB1dhGma>

### **Covid-19: UK orders extra 40m doses of Valneva vaccine**

The UK has ordered an extra 40 million doses of a coronavirus vaccine from the French pharmaceutical company Valneva, that should become available later in the year and into 2022. The government says it will give flexibility should people need revaccinating next winter or beyond. The UK has secured 407 million doses of different coronavirus vaccines - more than enough for the entire population. Valneva's jab is still being tested in trials. Although those will take time to satisfy regulators before it can be rolled out, manufacturing at a site in West Lothian, Scotland, has already begun. The site is already supporting 100 new highly-skilled local jobs for scientists and technicians.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/health-55887264>

### **Israel to give 5,000 coronavirus vaccines to Palestinian doctors**

Israel has agreed to transfer 5,000 doses of the coronavirus vaccine to the Palestinians to immunize frontline medical workers, Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz's office announced Sunday. It was the first time that Israel has confirmed the transfer of vaccines to the Palestinians, who lag far behind Israel's aggressive vaccination campaign and have not yet received any vaccines.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/israel-give-5-000-coronavirus-vaccines-palestinian-doctors-n1256317>

### **South Africa welcomes first delivery of COVID-19 vaccines**

South Africa gave a hero's welcome Monday to the delivery of its first COVID-19 vaccines — 1 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine produced by the Serum Institute of India. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa greeted the crates of vaccine that arrived at Johannesburg's O.R. Tambo International Airport. The shipment will be followed up later this month by another 500,000 doses. The vaccine will be effective in preventing severe disease and death from the variant that has become dominant in South Africa, a vaccine expert says. The AstraZeneca vaccines will be used to inoculate South Africa's front-line health workers, which will kickstart the country's vaccination campaign. The first jabs are expected to be administered in mid-February, after the vaccines are tested and approved by South Africa's drug regulatory authorities.

<https://apnews.com/article/south-africa-cyril-ramaphosa-coronavirus-pandemic-africa-johannesburg-7fd2af7e8a324bcf5581476d92dce6eb/gallery/7121f691982b47a8b10ead14d4c06676>

### **Israel extends nationwide coronavirus lockdown**

Israel's nationwide lockdown was extended Monday to contain the coronavirus which has continued to spread rapidly as the country presses ahead with an aggressive vaccination campaign. The current lockdown, declared on December 27, is the third in the Jewish state since pandemic began last year. The cabinet prolonged the closure until Friday morning, but scheduled a fresh meeting for Wednesday to assess whether a further extension was required, a statement from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the health ministry said.

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210201-israel-extends-nationwide-coronavirus-lockdown>

### **COVAX to send millions of AstraZeneca shots to Latin America**

The COVAX global vaccine sharing scheme expects to deliver 35.3 million doses of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine to 36 Caribbean and Latin American states from mid-February to the end of June, the World Health Organization's regional office said. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) said the Americas region needed to immunise about 500 million people to control the pandemic. It said WHO would complete its review in a few days of the Oxford University-AstraZeneca vaccine for emergency use listing (EUL). "The number of doses and delivery schedule are still subject to EUL and manufacturing production capacity," PAHO said, adding that supply deals also had to be agreed with producers. Of the 36 nations receiving AstraZeneca's shot, it said four countries, namely Bolivia, Colombia, El Salvador and Peru, would also receive a total of 377,910 doses of the PfizerBioNTech vaccine from mid-February.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/1/covax-to-send-astrazeneca-millions-of-shots-to-latin-america>

### **Australia will have enough Covid-19 vaccine to cover its population 'several times over', Scott Morrison says**

Australia will spend more than \$2 billion (A\$1.9b) on equipping hospitals and other health centres to administer coronavirus vaccines that will see 26 million Australians vaccinated by the end of the year in one of the country's largest-ever logistical exercises. Prime Minister Scott Morrison made the funding commitment during a major speech to the National Press Club in Canberra on Monday. "Our aim is to give Australians the opportunity to be vaccinated by October of this year, commencing in just a few weeks' time."

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/world/australia/300219208/australia-will-have-enough-covid19-vaccine-to-cover-its-population>

[-several-times-over-scott-morrison-says](#)

### **Pakistan receives first COVID vaccine shipment from China**

Pakistan has received its first doses of the coronavirus vaccine, with China donating half a million doses of the Sinopharm vaccine to the country, the health minister says. A Pakistani military aircraft carrying the shipment landed in the Pakistani capital Islamabad early on Monday, Dr Faisal Sultan said. "Praise be to Allah, the first batch of Sinopharm vaccine has arrived! Grateful to China and everyone who made this happen," he said. Video footage showed a forklift unloading boxes of the vaccine from a military transport plane. Sinopharm, a Chinese state-owned company, has developed one of two major Chinese vaccines to have been rolled out around the globe, alongside Sinovac's Coronavac vaccine. Phase three trials for the Chinese CanSino vaccine are also ongoing in Pakistan, which granted emergency use authorisation for the Sinopharm, AstraZeneca and Sputnik V vaccines last month.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/1/pakistan-receives-first-shipment-of-coronavirus-vaccine>

### **Herd Immunity in Sight for India's Capital?**

The latest antibody testing data conducted in Delhi, India suggests that the nation's capital may be very close to attaining herd immunity against COVID-19. The Delhi government has been regularly conducting antibody tests since August 2020 to assess the spread of the virus in the capital region. In the fifth and the largest survey so far, more than 28,000 samples were tested across 11 districts in Delhi between Jan. 11 and Jan. 22. Preliminary results show that more than 60% of residents in one district in Delhi had antibodies against the coronavirus. The antibody rate in other districts more than 50%. If these findings hold true, it would imply that half of the city's 20 million people has been exposed to the virus and recovered.

<https://www.webmd.com/lung/news/20210129/herd-immunity-in-sight-for-indias-capital>

### **Why can't Ireland be more like New Zealand on Covid?**

For the first time, how to confront the threat posed by Covid-19 has become political. On one side are the government and the National Public Health Emergency Team (Nphet), pursuing a policy of suppressing the virus through intermittent lockdowns. On the opposing side is a "zero Covid" movement, initially led by scientists but now backed by several opposition parties, which wants much stricter controls to emulate the example of New Zealand and rid Ireland of the coronavirus. The most prominent advocate of zero Covid has been the Independent Scientific Advisory Group (Isag), a collective of scientists from both sides of the border. In order to eliminate community transmission, it suggests closing borders, imposing a mandatory 14-day quarantine on any new arrivals, and then rigorously tracking

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/why-cant-ireland-be-more-like-new-zealand-on-covid-l3ptjj9xq>

## **Maintaining Services**

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### **Thousands in England to be tested in 'sprint' to halt South African Covid variant**

Tens of thousands of people will be tested in a door-to-door "two-week sprint" to halt the spread of the South African coronavirus variant as cases were found across England. Squads of health officials, firefighters and volunteers have been established to deliver and collect PCR test kits door-to-door and mobile testing units will be sent to each area. Wastewater could also be tested to determine the prevalence of the strain. The new South Africa variant, which is more transmissible than the original virus, appears to show a slightly "diminished" response to vaccines, and may eventually require a booster shot, Public Health England (PHE) said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/01/thousands-in-england-to-be-tested-in-sprint-to-halt-south-african-covid-variant>

### **Moderna proposes filling vials with additional doses of COVID-19 vaccine**

Moderna Inc said on Monday it is proposing filling vials with additional doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to ease a crunch in manufacturing as the company approaches the manufacturing of almost a million doses a day. "The company is proposing filling vials with additional doses of vaccine, up to 15 doses versus the current 10 doses," Moderna said in an emailed statement. "Moderna would need to have further discussions with the FDA to assure the agency's comfort with this approach before implementing," the company said, referring to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

[https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-moderna-vaccine/moderna-proposes-filling-vials-with-additional-doses-of-covid-19-vaccine-idUSKBN2A2041?feedType=mktg&feedName=healthNews&WT.mc\\_id=Partner-Google](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-moderna-vaccine/moderna-proposes-filling-vials-with-additional-doses-of-covid-19-vaccine-idUSKBN2A2041?feedType=mktg&feedName=healthNews&WT.mc_id=Partner-Google)

### **Bayer agrees to help CureVac produce coronavirus vaccine**

German drug conglomerate Bayer will help CureVac manufacture tens of millions more doses of the biotech's experimental coronavirus vaccine beginning as soon as the end of this year, company executives said in a Monday briefing with the German health minister. Bayer and CureVac are already co-developing the vaccine, with the large pharma providing support for clinical testing and regulatory discussions in other countries. Now, after discussions with the German government, Bayer has also agreed to make 160 million doses of CureVac's shot in 2022. CureVac recently began a Phase 2/3 study testing whether its vaccine prevents COVID-19. The company aims to enroll into the trial some 36,000 volunteers in Europe and South America. Early results could be available by the end of March, CureVac's CFO Pierre Kemula recently told BioPharma Dive.

<https://www.biopharmadive.com/news/curevac-bayer-coronavirus-vaccine-manufacturing/594283/>

### **Critically-ill Covid-19 patients being sent to Bristol from Birmingham amid 'extreme' ICU pressure**

A hospital in Bristol is taking critically ill coronavirus patients from as far away as Birmingham. Southmead Hospital is stepping in amid "extreme" pressure on intensive care units (ICUs) elsewhere, BristolLive has reported. The hospital in north Bristol is taking about five coronavirus - positive patients from other regions each week. And that number is expected to rise, according to a hospital chief. North Bristol NHS Trust's chief operating officer, Karen Brown, said: "We've had patients transferred to us from Kent and also Birmingham as well."

<https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/critically-ill-covid-19-patients-19745194>

### **French police block passengers as new Covid rules kick in**

French border police turned away some passengers bound for non-EU destinations Monday as new rules came into force banning flights to and from countries outside the bloc. Prime Minister Jean Castex announced the measure Friday as part of new efforts to contain Covid-19 infections and avoid another nationwide lockdown. Travellers must also present proof of a recent negative Covid test. Only urgent reasons for travel are accepted and border police require written proof before allowing passengers to board, as Toure, a Malian national, found out when he tried to leave France for Bamako without the necessary document. "I said that my mother, whom I hadn't seen in a while, was ill but they told me I needed proof," Toure, who withheld his last name, told AFP at Paris's main airport Roissy-Charles-de-Gaulle.

<https://au.news.yahoo.com/french-police-block-passengers-covid-122652343.html>

### **Routine vaccinations in India disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic**

In less than three months from its detection, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) a pandemic. COVID-19's causative agent, severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), is highly infective. To date, over 103 million cases have been reported, with over 2.23 million deaths. At various points in the pandemic's trajectory, the rapid spread of COVID-19 across many parts of the world have forced numerous nations into a string of lockdowns. In India, lockdown measures have resulted in major disruptions to essential health services, including routine immunization drives for children. Such interruptions

during previous epidemics have led to outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases, amplifying morbidity and mortality.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20210201/Routine-vaccinations-in-India-disrupted-by-the-COVID-19-pandemic.aspx>

### **Covid-19 update: No new cases in community or at border**

In New Zealand, there have been no new cases of Covid-19 in the community or managed isolation reported today, Covid-19 Response minister Chris Hipkins says. No new community cases were reported in New Zealand on Sunday, following last week's three confirmed border-related infections. One new case was confirmed in managed isolation.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/435574/covid-19-update-no-new-cases-in-community-or-at-border>

### **Americans scramble for appointments for second COVID-19 vaccine dose**

As more Americans ready for their second COVID-19 vaccine shot, some patients are falling through the cracks of an increasingly complex web of providers and appointment systems. While many people are getting their required second doses, the process is taking a toll on some of the most vulnerable - older adults who in many cases rely on family members or friends to navigate complex sign-up systems and inconvenient locations. Available vaccines need to be given as two separate doses weeks apart, and confusion is further taxing an already challenged health care system. Houston's health department on Friday told those seeking a second dose to be patient, saying the volume of calls was creating long wait times at its call center.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-vaccine-doses/americans-scramble-for-appointments-for-second-covid-19-vaccine-dose-idUSKBN2A125G>

## **Healthcare Innovations**

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### **Potential side effects of coronavirus vaccine listed by NHS Scotland**

NHS Scotland has listed a number of side effects Scots may experience after receiving the coronavirus jab. More than half a million Scots have received their first dose of the vaccine, according to the latest Scottish Government data. Officials are hoping to vaccinate around 400,000 Scots per week by the end of this month. The most vulnerable people in Scotland will be vaccinated during the first wave of the vaccination programme. Those included in the groups listed have been advised of the side effects they may have once they get the jab. Side effects experienced are usually mild and are much less serious than contracting Covid-19 itself. Any conditions that arise following the vaccine should "go away within a few days", according to NHS Scotland.

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/coronavirus-vaccine-side-effects-scotland-23423165>

### **White House awards \$230M to help produce over-the-counter, rapid COVID-19 tests**

Andy Slavitt, White House COVID-19 adviser, said the administration will provide nearly \$232 million to an Australian company called Ellume, which received authorization for the test in December. The company was part of the National Institutes of Health's RADx initiative to spur test development, and received \$30 million from the program. "Thanks to this contract, they'll be able to scale their production to manufacture more than 19 million test kits per month by the end of this year," Slavitt told reporters.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/white-house-awards-24230m-to-help-produce-over-the-counter-rapid-covid-19-tests/ar-BB1dibP1>

### **Computer model makes strides in search for COVID-19 treatments**

A new deep-learning model that can predict how human genes and medicines will interact has identified at least 10 compounds that may hold promise as treatments for COVID-19. All but two of the drugs are still considered investigational and are being tested for effectiveness against hepatitis C, fungal disease, cancer and heart disease. The list also includes the approved drugs cyclosporine,

an immunosuppressant that prevents transplant organ rejection, and anidulafungin, an antifungal agent. The discovery was made by computer scientists, meaning much more work needs to be done before any of these medications would be confirmed as safe and effective treatments for people infected with SARS-CoV-2. But by using artificial intelligence to arrive at these options, the scientists have saved pharmaceutical and clinical researchers the time and money it would take to search for potential COVID-19 drugs on a piecemeal basis.

[http://www.eurekaalert.org/pub\\_releases/2021-02/osu-cmm020121.php](http://www.eurekaalert.org/pub_releases/2021-02/osu-cmm020121.php)

### **Vaccine manufacturing greenhorn Bayer to make 160M doses of CureVac's COVID-19 shot**

In its nearly 160-year history, Bayer has never produced vaccines for humans. But the COVID-19 pandemic is changing that. As part of a recently penned collaboration, Bayer will help manufacture German compatriot CureVac's mRNA-based coronavirus vaccine, CVnCOV, in addition to aiding in R&D, regulatory affairs, supply chain management and potential marketing operations, Stefan Oelrich, Bayer's pharma chief, said in a press briefing Monday. To that end, Bayer plans to make 160 million doses of the CureVac shot in 2022, with the first commercial product expected to be made available at the end of this year. The vaccine entered phase 3 testing in December. The work will be done at Bayer's Wuppertal site in Germany, Oelrich said. The company recently inked a deal to sell a plant at the site to Chinese CDMO WuXi Biologics for €150 million, with COVID-19 vaccine production also featured as part of WuXi's plan for use of the facility.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/manufacturing/vaccine-manufacturing-greenhorn-bayer-to-make-160m-doses-curevac-s-covid-19-mrna-shot>