

Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

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Isolation Tips

Amid raging second COVID-19 wave, the elderly battle loneliness and anxiety

In India, the COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly difficult for people who have been living independently and are elderly. Besides being highly susceptible to the virus, their old age has also made it difficult for them to commute and socialise, adding to their loneliness and anxiety. "Though I manage to get essential items, it is the loneliness and anxiety that has been really bothering me," said Sarin, who became eligible for anti-coronavirus vaccination last month after the health ministry said people aged 45 and above account for about 88 per cent of all COVID-19 deaths in India making them the most vulnerable section of society. The septuagenarian said, "I am not very tech-savvy but I learnt to buy basic items online."

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/amid-raging-second-covid-19-wave-the-elderly-battle-loneliness-and-anxiety/articleshow/82127157.cms>

Hygiene Helpers

The exotic holiday hotspot offering coronavirus vaccinations to visitors amid a slow vaccine rollout in Australia

It was one of the first countries to fully reopen to travellers, and now the Maldives is striving to get ahead of the game when it comes to vaccine tourism. As Australia grapples with a slow COVID-19 vaccination rollout, the small archipelagic state in South Asia has launched an inventive invitation to potential visitors. Officials for the Indian Ocean destination have announced plans to offer coronavirus vaccinations to tourists on arrival in a bid to lure more tourists over. Dr Abdulla Mausoom, the country's minister for tourism, has confirmed that the Maldives is developing a "3V tourism" scheme, which would allow tourists to "Visit, Vaccinate and Vacation."

<https://7news.com.au/travel/the-exotic-holiday-hotspot-offering-coronavirus-vaccinations-to-visitors-amid-a-slow-vaccine-rollout-in-australia-c-2630197>

Brussels' Bru-VAX vaccine reservation system is online

As of Monday, people living in the Brussels Capital Region can use the Bru-VAX reservation system to register for a coronavirus vaccine appointment. The digital tool, hosted on the Doctena platform, will replace the current system which involves people who are eligible for a vaccine receiving a letter with a code to make an appointment with.

<https://www.brusselstimes.com/news/belgium-all-news/health/165551/brussels-coronavirus-vaccine-reservation-system-bru-vax-launched-today-doctena-national-registry-number-inge-never-brussels-health-inspectorate-general-practitioner-pharmacy/>

All U.S. Adults Now Eligible For Covid-19 Vaccine—These States Are Doing The Best (And Worst) Rollouts

Hawaii, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington, D.C., were the last to open up eligibility on Monday, after other states expanded access to the general public over the past month. New Hampshire has so far given at least one dose of the vaccine to 58% of its population—the highest of any state—while New Mexico and Maine are tied for the highest share of residents who are fully vaccinated at 32.3%, according to Bloomberg.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/alisondurkee/2021/04/19/all-us-adults-now-eligible-for-covid-19-vaccine-these-states-are-doing-the-best-and-worst-rollouts/>

Fifth of adults fully vaccinated against COVID-19 as UK hits 10m second dose milestone

The UK passed the milestone of 10m second doses on 18 April - meaning nearly one in five of all UK adults have now received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine. Government figures show that by the end of Saturday 17 April, 9,930,846 people UK-wide had received two doses of vaccine. More than 350,000 second doses were delivered per day on average over the week to 17 April - and the daily total has dropped below 200,000 just once in the past 12 days - suggesting that the 10m mark was passed over the weekend.

<https://www.gponline.com/fifth-adults-fully-vaccinated-against-covid-19-uk-hits-10m-second-dose-milestone/article/1713264>

A job on the job: Companies, unions offer COVID-19 vaccines

Marie Watson wanted to be among the first in line when she and other essential workers became eligible for the coronavirus vaccine — and with good reason. The maintenance parts buyer for a Mission Foods tortilla plant in Pueblo, Colorado, had lost her father to COVID-19 in the fall and was told by a doctor last year that she herself almost certainly had the virus. So when her union, the United Food Workers and Commercial Workers, secured appointments for the plant's 200 workers, she jumped in her car and drove to a nearby drive-thru clinic for the first of two doses. "There was this sense of relief," Watson said. "This was more confirmation that I'm on my way to being normal."

<https://apnews.com/article/us-news-coronavirus-pandemic-colorado-labor-unions-e0f1d6ec967eaa9ab180f5b0f1c74b51>

Community Activities

Intutorly, free virtual tutoring service for kids, wins first prize in high school entrepreneurship competition

Intutorly, a free online tutoring service started by high school teenagers amid the pandemic, won first prize in the University of Delaware Horn Entrepreneurship's Diamond Challenge on Friday, weeks after it was featured in "CBS This Morning's" series A More Perfect Union. The story highlighted how high school students from around the country are helping younger kids bridge the digital divide through the service that pairs tutors with tutees. When the piece aired, Intutorly included about 1,000 kids — 500 tutors and 500 tutees. Intutorly's co-founders, Virginia teenagers Alex Joel and his younger brother Ben, say that in the month since then, the program has grown to help hundreds more kids.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/intutorly-free-tutoring-service-wins-first-prize-high-school-entrepreneurship-competition/>

Greta Thunberg joins fight for coronavirus vaccine equity

Teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg has urged governments, vaccine developers and the world to "step up their game" to fight vaccine inequity after the richest countries snatched up most COVID-19 vaccine doses and those in poorer nations have gone lacking. Her comments on Monday came as the World Health Organization announced 5.2 million new confirmed virus cases during the latest week, the largest weekly count yet, according to the UN health agency.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/19/greta-thunberg-joins-fight-against-vaccine-inequity>

COVID vaccine shortfall: The Abu Dhabi art dealer peddling jabs

From a small office in an Abu Dhabi skyscraper, Ukrainian national Natalya Muzaleva and her Hungarian husband Istvan Perger run an art gallery, a real estate agency and an oilfield services company. They have also pursued another venture: selling COVID-19 vaccines into Europe.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/4/19/covid-vaccine-shortfall-the-abu-dhabi-art-dealer-peddling-jabs>

What To Know Before Your Second Dose Of The AstraZeneca Vaccine

Dozens of HuffPost UK readers have shared questions and concerns about the second dose of the

AstraZeneca vaccine. Since rumours surrounding the AstraZeneca jab and a possible link to blood clots began swirling, there has been some worry about what that means for those who've already had their first dose of the vaccine. "If I've had my first AstraZeneca vaccine, will I be at risk of getting a clot on my second?" asks HuffPost UK reader Ashleigh. While reader Jacqueline asks: "I had the AstraZeneca jab in February and was very ill for over a week and still don't feel well. I am reluctant to have the second dose. Could I have the Pfizer?"

https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/second-dose-of-the-astrazeneca-vaccine_uk_607971b8e4b0bc5a3a55a899?ncid=tweetInkukhpmg00000001

COVID variants are hitting US young hard

Throughout previous waves of Covid, children and young adults eluded the pandemic's gravest consequences, exhibiting mild symptoms or none at all. Now faster-spreading variants are sending more to the hospital. Fatalities remain low, but doctors say the virus is now making the young sicker, some gravely. Cautionary tales are beginning to multiply. University of Alabama students are mourning the death of the basketball team's unofficial mascot, Luke Ratliff, a 23-year-old plaid-clad campus fixture. The student affectionately known as Fluffopotamus died from Covid-19 complications early this month as the team went on an NCAA tournament run. In Michigan, where Covid-19 is spreading at one of the planet's fastest rates — an average of almost 8,000 new cases a day — hospitals are seeing far more youths. The state's Department of Health and Human Services reported 50 pediatric cases in hospitals Thursday, the most since the post-holiday surge in early January.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/4/19/covid-variants-are-hitting-us-young-hard>

Tredegar Covid community film wins major European award

A "remarkable" documentary about a community coming together during the pandemic has won a European film award. As people isolated, volunteers in Blaenau Gwent were filmed as they completed 15,000 tasks including delivering food and prescriptions. The documentary, called Together - Volunteers of a Covid community, won two awards at the North Europe Fusion International Film Festival. One of these was for the best film of the entire festival. "A big part of why this film was chosen was because this group of film-makers are selfless and the work they have done is incredible," said festival director Steve Grossmith in announcing the results.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-56763211>

Working Remotely

Britons working at home spend more time on job in Covid crisis, ONS finds

People working from home during lockdown spend more time at their jobs and are less likely to be promoted or take time off sick, but are paid above average wages, according to an official study. Documenting the shift to remote work during the pandemic, the Office for National Statistics said the number of people who did some work at home in 2020 rose by 9.4 percentage points from a year earlier to 35.9% of the workforce – representing more than 11 million employees. However, there were substantial variations between occupations and parts of the country, reflecting the differing experiences of the pandemic for workers as some were hit harder by the crisis than others.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/apr/19/working-at-home-job-covid-ons-off-sick>

I Asked 2,000 People About Their Remote Work Experience. Here's What They Shared

We're now a year into massive remote work experiment driven by necessity and marked with trial and error. Now, as companies weigh their future with remote work, leaders must shift from helping their company survive virtual work, to helping their employees thrive while working from home. To take a pulse of the present state of remote work, and help predict the future of the model, I surveyed 2,000 professionals—including CEOs, department heads, managers and individual contributors—to learn about their remote-work experiences. Here are some of the key findings

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/robertglazer/2021/04/19/i-asked-2000-people-about-their-remote-work-experience-here-s-what-they-shared/>

Remote Working has caused a surge in mental health problems with 828,000 workers in the UK currently struggling

As April is Stress Awareness Month, Instant Offices researched how the last year has affected employees mental health but also what business and individual employees can do to improve and support mental health. As remote working has been the new normal for the last year, self-isolation and health-related anxiety have created a general sense of unease for many people. A YouGov survey showed that Covid had impacted the UK's overall mood, with 41% of Brits feeling stressed and 38% feeling frustrated.

<https://www.fenews.co.uk/press-releases/67036-remote-working-has-caused-a-surge-in-mental-health-problems-with-828-000-workers-in-the-uk-currently-struggling>

Remote workers flock to Spain's Canary Islands: 'It's a dream come true'

The tourism industry in Spain's Canary Islands has been devastated by the coronavirus pandemic. The streets of the main tourist destinations remain empty, with less than 40% of accommodation (around 17,000 beds) open for business. The Canary Islands is now the Spanish region with the highest level of unemployment and experts warn that this could spark a deep social crisis. But many businesses have been saved by the bid to attract remote workers. The professionals who arrive in the Canary Islands to work remotely have greater purchasing power and spend more. What's more, they do not bring with them the negative impact of mass tourism.

https://english.elpais.com/economy_and_business/2021-04-19/remote-workers-flock-to-spains-canary-islands-its-a-dream-come-true.html

The Key To Being A Great Virtual Leader Is Empathy

While both organizations and individuals are unsure of what life will look like post-Covid-19, one thing is for sure: remote work is here to stay. A 2020 Gallup poll found at least 72% of office workers would like to work remotely at least two days a week, while one-third said they would prefer to never go to an office again. This means leaders will have to learn how to effectively manage their teams virtually. Leaders will be leading individuals in different time zones in various environments with little or no information about what's really going on for their employees. As strange as this sounds, now that we're all in different places, organizations need leaders who know how to create and drive connection and the best way to drive connection is by practicing empathy.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/tessbrigham/2021/04/19/the-key-to-being-a-great-virtual-leader-is-empathy/>

Virtual Classrooms

Virtual-only schooling drops below 10% for 1st time

The share of school districts in the US continuing to offer virtual-only instruction to students fell below 10 percent for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic began, according to statistics on pandemic schooling compiled weekly by Burbio. That signals a tenuous return to normal for all but a few regions on the West Coast and in the Northeast. "That virtual ring is narrowing," said Burbio co-founder Dennis Roche. "That is a big deal." Those holdouts, however, are among the most densely populated regions of the country, while many districts have returned only haltingly, with only a few hours of in-person instruction per week. And some parents who have been given the option to have their children back in the classroom have kept them at home for now.

<https://au.news.yahoo.com/virtual-only-schooling-drops-below-10-for-first-time-134220089.html>

Public Policies

COVID-19: Families reunite as travel bubble between Australia and New Zealand opens

Families and friends have been able to reunite after a long-anticipated travel bubble between

Australia and New Zealand opened. The start of quarantine-free travel was a relief for families who have been separated by the coronavirus pandemic as well as struggling tourist operators. It marked the first, tentative steps towards what both countries hope will become a gradual reopening to the rest of the world

<https://news.sky.com/story/families-reunite-as-travel-bubble-between-australia-and-new-zealand-opens-12279975>

Belgian Olympians will get priority for coronavirus vaccine, health ministers announce

The Belgian Olympic and Paralympic athletes who have been selected to attend the Olympic Games in Tokyo this August will receive their coronavirus vaccines as soon as possible, the Belgian Ministers of Health decided. A total of 170 Olympians and 55 Paralympians are expected to be administered with either the Pfizer or Moderna doses at the Heysel vaccination centre in Brussels in the coming weeks.

<https://www.brusselstimes.com/news/belgium-all-news/health/165574/belgian-olympians-will-get-priority-for-coronavirus-vaccine-health-ministers-announce-olympics-tokyo-paralympic-athletes-ministers-of-health-olympic-interfederal-committee/>

White House expands federal vaccine programs, taking more control of coronavirus vaccination efforts

The Biden administration has ramped up its role in distributing and administering coronavirus vaccines, boosting federal pipelines in recent months with more doses and more vaccination sites in preparation for mounting US supply and the next phase of the US vaccination campaign. As the US officially entered that phase on Monday -- with every person 16 years and older now eligible to be vaccinated -- Biden administration officials said they estimate that 90% of Americans now live within five miles of a vaccination site as a result of the expanded federal channels. Nearly 40,000 pharmacies are now equipped to put shots in arms through a direct-to-pharmacy federal vaccine program, up from just a few thousand when the program launched two months ago.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/04/19/politics/covid-vaccine-federal-program-expanding/index.html>

Delhi announces week-long lockdown as Modi holds emergency meeting on soaring Covid wave

India's national capital Delhi announced a week-long lockdown on Monday as the government battles a surge in Covid-19 cases amidst a shortage in the supply of oxygen and hospital beds. Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said a lockdown would be in place from Monday evening till the morning of 26 April as the capital recorded more than 25,

<https://www.independent.co.uk/asia/india/delhi-lockdown-covid-wave-india-b1833639.html>

India to waive import duty on COVID-19 vaccines, says govt source

India will waive its 10% customs duty on imported COVID-19 vaccines, a senior government official told Reuters on Monday, as it tries to boost supplies to counter a dramatic surge in coronavirus cases. Imports of Russia's Sputnik V vaccine are due to arrive soon and the government has also urged Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson and Johnson to sell their products to India. The official, who declined to be named, also said the government was considering allowing private entities to import approved vaccines for sale on the open market without government intervention. They could also be given the freedom to set pricing, he added.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/india-waive-import-duty-covid-19-vaccines-says-govt-source-2021-04-19/>

Britain to add India to COVID-19 travel red-list - health minister

Britain will add India to its travel "red-list" on Friday after detecting 103 cases of a coronavirus variant first identified in the country, health minister Matt Hancock said on Monday. "We've made the difficult but vital decision to add India to the Red List. This means anyone who is not a UK or Irish resident or a British citizen cannot enter the UK if they've been in India in the previous 10 days," Hancock told parliament. "UK and Irish residents and British citizens who've been in India in the past

10 days before their arrival will need to complete hotel quarantine for 10 days from the time of arrival."

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/britain-add-india-covid-19-travel-red-list-health-minister-2021-04-19/>

The world needs a patent waiver on Covid vaccines. Why is the UK blocking it?

Last year the British government made a series of mistakes in its handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. As countries from Thailand to the US battle another wave of infections driven by more virulent strains, the UK risks making another historic mistake that could scupper our chance to end this pandemic. Because coronavirus cases continue to rise worldwide, the risk of vaccine-resistant variants is increasing. Public health voices have already warned that if we don't rapidly vaccinate the world's population, our current generation of Covid-19 vaccines could be rendered ineffective within a year. The need for a rapid, global vaccination rollout is clear and urgent. Pandemics are, by definition, global health crises. No matter how high our vaccination rate may be, no matter what restrictions we place on travel, we will not be safe from Covid-19 until we have suppressed the virus across the globe. As things stand, many countries in the southern hemisphere may not manage to achieve widespread vaccination until 2024. This long delay puts us all at risk.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/apr/18/patent-waiver-covid-vaccines-uk-variants>

Maintaining Services

Slovakia opens shops and services as lockdown eases

Slovaks lined up at malls, returned to hair salons and visited libraries on Monday for the first time in months as the central European nation opened shops and services in a limited capacity as part of an easing of coronavirus restrictions. The nation of 5.5 million, which is emerging from its worst wave of the pandemic, also opened churches, libraries, pools, zoos and some shops while it seeks to kick-start its vaccination program. Hotels also opened their doors for limited numbers of guests but restaurants remain closed for indoor dining. Outdoor trips away from people's home districts are also now allowed.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-slovakia-reopening/slovakia-opens-shops-and-services-as-lockdown-eases-idUSL8N2MC1HZ>

Greece opens to tourists, anxious to move on from crisis season

Greece began opening to tourists on Monday with few bookings but hopes for a better season to help make up for a 2020 devastated by the coronavirus pandemic. On Rhodes island, where most visitors are from abroad, hoteliers are scrubbing, polishing and painting in anticipation of a make-or-break year. "We're preparing the hotel in order to start as soon as the government gives us the green light," said George Tselios, general manager of Sun Beach Hotel, whose customers are from Scandinavia, Germany, Austria and Britain. Greece will formally open on May 14 but starting Monday, tourists from the European Union, the United States, Britain, Serbia, Israel and the United Arab Emirates will not quarantine if they are vaccinated or test negative for COVID-19.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/greece-opens-tourists-anxious-move-crisis-season-2021-04-19/>

COVID-19: More than 10m in UK now had second vaccine jab as pace of rollout quickens

More than half of those deemed to be most at risk from COVID-19, who are being prioritised by ministers, have received both jabs.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-more-than-10m-in-uk-now-had-second-vaccine-jab-as-pace-of-rollout-quickens-12280432>

Australia looks to speed up COVID-19 vaccine rollout to over-50s

Australia plans to accelerate the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines to people over 50 after advising under-50s not to get the AstraZeneca jab due to blood clot concerns, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said on Monday. State leaders agreed to bring forward vaccinating over-50s, going beyond frontline

workers, the elderly, the disabled and people with underlying medical conditions, at a national cabinet meeting, with formal approval due on Thursday, Morrison said in a statement. They also agreed to set up mass inoculation sites as vaccine supplies increase.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/australia-looks-speed-up-covid-19-vaccine-rollout-over-50s-2021-04-19/>

Covid-19 vaccine bookings to open for 35-39 age group

Vaccine appointments for a limited number of people aged between 35 and 39-years-old are being made available from Monday. The Department of Health said it is the latest phase of the vaccine roll out. It said bookings will open to the entire 35-39 age group by the end of April. The slots are mainly for the SSE Arena vaccine centre in Belfast and can be booked on a first come first served basis from 14:00 BST. Appointments in community pharmacies will be made available to 35-39 year olds later this month depending on vaccine supplies. Patricia Donnelly, who heads up Northern Ireland's vaccine programme, told the BBC's Evening Extra programme that vaccine wastage across Northern Ireland is less than 1%.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56799557>

US warns against travel to 80% of world due to coronavirus

The State Department on Monday urged Americans reconsider any international travel they may have planned and said it would issue specific warnings not to visit roughly 80% of the world's countries due to risks from the coronavirus pandemic. The United States hasn't had a global advisory warning against international travel since August, when guidance was revoked by the Trump administration. The advice issued by the department isn't a formal global advisory. Instead, it says the State Department will start using Centers for Disease Control and Prevention standards as it prepares health and safety guidelines for individual countries. Because of those standards, about 80% of countries will be classified as "Level 4" or "do not travel."

<https://apnews.com/article/politics-travel-health-coronavirus-pandemic-united-states-971007b4f02b53f3d44a1dd8b27d9228>

India to allow COVID-19 vaccines for all adults as cases surge

India will let all citizens over 18 have COVID-19 vaccinations from May 1, the government said on Monday, as the health system creaked under the weight of record-high cases and the capital region of New Delhi ordered a lockdown. Facing growing criticism over its handling of the second wave of the pandemic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration said vaccine manufacturers would have to supply 50% of doses to the federal government and the rest to state governments and the open market at a pre-declared price.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/indias-daily-covid-19-cases-rise-by-record-273810-2021-04-19/>

Bitter experience helps French ICUs crest latest virus wave

While mechanical ventilation is unavoidable for some covid-19 patients, it's a step taken less systematically now than at the start of the pandemic. The shift to less-invasive breathing treatments also is helping French ICUs stave off collapse under a renewed crush of coronavirus cases. Super-charged by a more contagious virus variant that first ravaged neighboring Britain, the third infection wave in France has pushed the country's COVID-19-related death toll past 100,000 people. Hospitals across the country are grappling again with the macabre mathematics of making space for thousands of critically sick patients.

<https://apnews.com/article/france-icu-coronavirus-surge-c47d52a99b97302bd1ef80195d723fe2>

Healthcare Innovations

Volunteers to be reinfected with Covid-19 to help improve vaccines

Volunteers who have recovered from a coronavirus infection will be deliberately infected with the

virus for a second time, in a new study which could help develop new treatments and vaccines against the disease. The study, led by a team from the University of Oxford, will investigate how a previous infection affects a second exposure to the virus and what kind of immune response is needed to protect people. It is known that some Covid-19 survivors have gone on to become reinfected at a later stage, and as variants of the virus emerge with new mutations the risk to the success of vaccines and natural protection could be significant.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus-vaccine-reinfect-covid-study-b1833337.html>

COVID-19: Young people who have had coronavirus will get £5,000 for being deliberately re-exposed to the virus

Young people who have previously had COVID-19 are going to be deliberately exposed to the virus for a second time - in a new study that aims to see how their immune systems react. The University of Oxford's "human challenge" trial also hopes to discover what dose of coronavirus is needed to cause a reinfection, and what this may mean for developing protective immunity against the disease.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-young-people-who-have-had-coronavirus-are-going-to-be-deliberately-exposed-to-the-virus-for-second-time-12279903>

There's a new COVID-19 variant in India. How worried should we be?

"This is a variant of interest we are following," Maria van Kerkhove, the World Health Organization's technical lead on COVID-19 told reporters. "Having two of these mutations, which have been seen in other variants around the world, is concerning," she added, going on to say that 'there was a similarity with mutations that increase transmission as well as reduce neutralization, 'possibly' stunting the ability of vaccines to curb them.'

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/04/19/asia-pacific/india-coronavirus-variant/>

Ireland registers three cases of Indian COVID-19 variant

Ireland has registered its first three cases of a coronavirus variant first identified in India, a senior health official said on Monday. Cillian De Gascun, the head of Ireland's national virus laboratory, told journalists at least two of the cases were related to travel. He said the variant was still classified as a "variant of interest" rather than a "variant of concern."

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/ireland-registers-three-cases-indian-covid-19-variant-2021-04-19/>