

# Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

## 18th May 2021

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### Isolation Tips

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#### 'Covid has created huge amounts of hidden emotional distress'

Much has been written and said already about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our mental health. One of the hidden side effects of this is emotional distress and Dr Ann-Marie Creaven from the University of Limerick and mental health specialist Dr Harry Barry recently joined the Today With Claire Byrne show on RTÉ Radio One to discuss this topic. It's important that we accept it's the situation and not us that's abnormal. "It's OK to feel like crap sometimes, which we all do", says Barry. "I think it's really important that we work hard on the lifestyle changes. Make sure you get enough sleep. Do the alcohol detox. Don't drink from Monday to Friday. Try and get out for your bit of exercise. Try and for example, limit your technology. Shut down technology. Stop answering all your emails.

<https://www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2021/0513/1221417-covid-pandemic-emotional-distress-anxiety-loneliness-mental-health/>

#### Telangana Covid-19 patient builds himself an isolation bed on tree

An 18-year-old tribal student from Telangana's Nalgonda district, who tested positive for Covid-19 on May 4, built himself a makeshift isolation chamber atop a tree-- where he stayed put for 12 days-- to protect his family from the virus since his family house didn't have a separate room to quarantine him.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/18yr-old-covid-19-patient-builds-himself-an-isolation-ward-on-a-tree-101621250410512.html>

### Hygiene Helpers

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#### Survey shows 3 in 4 Kiwis adopted COVID-19 protective behaviors

Research from Massey University shows an overwhelming majority of New Zealanders support regional (94 percent) or national lockdowns (81 percent) if there are new COVID-19 infections in New Zealand. In a national survey conducted by Senior Lecturer Dr. Jagadish Thaker (JT) of the School of Communication, Journalism & Marketing in February and March 2021, with nearly 1100 respondents, three in four Kiwis (77 percent) said they had used the contact tracing app to record visits to the office, supermarkets and other venues. Dr. Thaker says the results show why effective communication from trusted sources continue to matter during and after vaccination.

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-05-survey-kiwis-covid-behaviors.html>

#### California will stay masked for another month

California won't lift its mask requirement until June 15 to give the public and businesses time to prepare and ensure cases stay low, the state health director said Monday, a decision that runs counter to many other states including Oregon and Washington that quickly aligned with last week's new federal guidelines. "This four-week period will give Californians time to prepare for this change, while we continue the relentless focus on delivering vaccines particularly to underserved communities and those that were hard hit throughout this pandemic," Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. Mark Ghaly said. The timing aligns with California Gov. Gavin Newsom's earlier announcement that if cases remain low, the state will drop nearly all COVID-19 restrictions on June 15.

<https://apnews.com/article/california-coronavirus-pandemic-government-and-politics-health-da661033232db5dcacfbf>

[692221361b2](#)

### **Retailers, states grapple with shifting COVID-19 mask mandates**

Major retailers across the country, including Target, Starbucks, and Walmart, are changing their in-store mask requirements following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) announcement last week that fully vaccinated Americans are now safe to resume almost all activities without wearing a mask. Starbucks, Walmart, Costco, and Trader Joe's have all said they will require masks for fully vaccinated patrons only if local law dictates it. Today Target and CVS said they will "strongly recommend" masks for unvaccinated customers and employees, but fully vaccinated shoppers are not expected to don masks. All businesses, however, have emphasized that they will follow local laws and regulations. Despite the new guidance from the CDC that vaccinated people don't need to wear masks for most activities, many vaccinated Americans remain reluctant to give up their masks, the Associated Press reports. The mask has acted as both a security measure and was a visible way to signal that a person took the pandemic seriously. As of yesterday, 18 states have lifted statewide mask mandates, meaning about one third of the country is now mask-free for the first time in roughly 1 year.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/05/retailers-states-grapple-shifting-covid-19-mask-mandates>

## **Community Activities**

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### **Covid-19: Thousands head overseas on holiday as rules ease**

Thousands of British holidaymakers have begun taking advantage of the easing of lockdown rules on overseas travel. Travellers from England, Scotland and Wales are jetting off to some countries in what the crisis-hit tourism industry hopes is the start of a recovery. Travellers can now visit 12 countries on the government's green list, including Portugal and Israel, without isolating on their return. The bosses of British Airways and Ryanair said confidence was returning. The vast majority of tourist destinations remain on the amber and red lists, meaning travellers must quarantine when they get back. Bookings also remain well down on pre-pandemic levels

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-57138371>

### **Pop-up barista van combats loneliness in rural villages, one cup of coffee at a time**

Rural Community Council, a charity based in Hinckley has launched a coffee van to travel across the county bringing people together over a cup of coffee. Last week, the Rural Coffee Connect van stopped in the village of Wing in Rutland, where High Sherrif of Rutland, David Wood, spent the morning with locals. "It was interesting to the number of people who came out," he said. "There were people there who otherwise might not talk to people during the week." Throughout the lockdown, weekly coffee mornings in the village had to stop. But the coffee van has offered residents a new alternative.

<https://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/local-news/pop-up-barista-van-combats-5409049>

### **Bengaluru Group Delivers Free, Fresh Meals To Families In Covid Isolation**

With hospital beds hard to find as India battles a devastating second wave of Covid infections, asymptomatic patients and those with mild symptoms are being encouraged to isolate themselves at home. But the fatigue caused by the infection makes it difficult to find the energy to cook healthy meals. This is where a group of Bengaluru-based NGOs, CoronaCare Bengaluru, has stepped in with their service, 'Food to your doorstep'. As part of the initiative, fresh and nutritious meals are being provided for free to Covid patients in home isolation and their families. The meals are being cooked at various kitchens spread across the city and delivered to the doorstep.

<https://www.ndtv.com/karnataka-news/bengaluru-group-delivers-free-fresh-meals-to-families-in-covid-isolation-2443425>

### **Joy for UK pubs and hugs tempered by rise in virus variant**

Drinks were raised in toasts and reunited friends hugged each other as thousands of U.K. pubs and restaurants opened Monday for indoor service for the first time since early January. Yet the prime minister sounded a cautious tone, warning about a more contagious COVID-19 variant that threatens reopening plans. Theaters, leisure venues and museums were also reopening as part of the latest step in easing nationwide restrictions, raising hopes that Britain's economy may soon start to recover from the devastating effects of the pandemic. Andy Frantzeskos, a chef at Nopi, an upmarket Mediterranean restaurant in London's Soho district, said he felt "a bit of anxiousness ... but more excitement than anything."

<https://apnews.com/article/europe-coronavirus-pandemic-lifestyle-health-a6a5442399e13292cab37fbff1a98c8c>

### **In New Vaccination Push, Biden Leans on His 'Community Corps'**

The federal government has set up mass vaccination sites at stadiums, sent doses to pharmacies and clinics serving lower-income Americans, and, on Friday, enticed the unvaccinated with the prospect of finally being able to shed their masks. But with the ranks of the willing and able dwindling, the campaign has in many places already morphed into a door-to-door and person-by-person effort. The Black Doctors Covid-19 Consortium is one of about 11,000 members of what the Department of Health and Human Services is calling its Covid-19 community corps, a loose constellation of volunteers, corporations, advocacy groups and local organizations working to vaccinate Americans often left behind by the nation's health care system.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/16/us/politics/coronavirus-vaccination.html>

### **Working Remotely**

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#### **More Than 70% Of White-Collar Workers In U.S. Still Working Remotely, Poll Finds**

More than half of the all adults employed in the United States were still working from home at least part-time as of last month, including 72% of white-collar workers, according to a new poll released by Gallup on Monday, but that number may start to drop following the CDC's latest guidance. When employees working remotely were asked for their preference moving forward, assuming their employer leaves the decision up to them, 35% say that they would continue working from home as much as possible. In contrast, 17% said they would prefer to cease working remotely, including 32% of workers in the education field looking to return to classrooms for in-person education.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/tommybeer/2021/05/17/more-than-70-of-white-collar-workers-in-us-still-working-remotely-poll-finds/>

#### **COVID-19: People working from home in UK more than doubled as pandemic struck - but at what cost?**

The proportion of people working from home (WFH) more than doubled last year as coronavirus crisis rules tore through UK workplaces, according to official figures. The data, compiled from a survey by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), showed 25.9% - or 8.4 million people - were completing duties from their place of residence at some point in the week they were spoken to. The figure compares with 12.4% in 2019. That was a time when COVID-19 was yet to emerge in Europe though the ramifications of the public health emergency have since sparked fierce debate over the future of the workplace.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-8-4-million-were-working-from-home-last-year-as-pandemic-struck-12309068>

### **Virtual Classrooms**

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#### **UN agencies invest \$11.6 million to improve virtual learning in West Kingston**

More than 200 students in five West Kingston communities are receiving improved access to virtual learning spaces and equipment under a combined \$11.6-million investment in tablets and technology centres donated by agencies of the United Nations in Jamaica.

[https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/un-agencies-invest-11-6-million-to-improve-virtual-learning-in-west-kingston\\_221533](https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/un-agencies-invest-11-6-million-to-improve-virtual-learning-in-west-kingston_221533)

## **Companies head to the classroom as demand for virtual education grows**

The past year of education has been tough for Natalie. The 15-year-old was bullied at her London state school but, even after lockdown kept pupils at home, what she regarded as her school's poor standard of remote learning left her miserable. In January, she switched — to a fully online private school. Natalie, who asked for her real name not to be used, is now studying for her GCSEs at King's College Online, an international virtual school launched in January by UK-based Inspired Education. Her new school day consists of recorded lectures and video classes, not with other local teenagers but with pupils in Asia or Europe, as well as walks listening to educational podcasts.

<https://www.ft.com/content/2c0251f3-0782-4b3a-a8e9-00a4983350a6>

## **Why We Need To Flip The Narrative That The Pandemic Has Damaged Education**

Children out of school, months of lost learning and widening gaps between students: it's become fashionable to see Covid-19 as having been a disaster for education. But perhaps we need to flip the narrative and look at how education will benefit from the pandemic, opening more doors than it closed and providing an opportunity to take a leap forward in how we teach our children.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/nickmorrison/2021/05/14/why-we-need-to-flip-the-narrative-that-the-pandemic-has-damaged-education/>

## **Public Policies**

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### **China backs developing countries' call to waive IP rights on COVID-19 vaccines**

China supports developing countries' appeal for the waiving of intellectual property rights for COVID-19 vaccines, the Chinese foreign ministry said on Monday. Zhao Lijian, a spokesman at the foreign ministry, was speaking at a regular news conference.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-backs-developing-countries-call-waive-ip-rights-covid-19-vaccines-2021-05-17/>

### **Covid-19: Lockdowns ease in England, Wales and most of Scotland**

People must continue to play their part in stopping coronavirus, Boris Johnson has said, as lockdown rules ease in England, Wales and most of Scotland. Millions can now socialise indoors in limited numbers, hug loved ones and visit pubs and restaurants inside. The ban on foreign travel has also been lifted and replaced with new rules. Mr Johnson said: "We have reached another milestone in our road map out of lockdown, but we must take this next step with a heavy dose of caution." The rule changes come as the variant first identified in India continues to spread in the UK, with mass testing rolled out to hotspots including Bolton in Greater Manchester and parts of London and Sefton.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-57136140>

### **Netherlands eases lockdown as coronavirus infections fall**

The Netherlands will ease its coronavirus lockdown measures slightly this week as the rollout of COVID-19 vaccinations has eased pressure on hospitals, health minister Hugo de Jonge said. Amusement parks and zoos will be allowed to reopen as of Wednesday, while outdoor service at bars and restaurants will be extended by two hours until 8 PM. Next steps to ease the lockdown are expected in the coming three weeks, De Jonge said.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/netherlands-eases-lockdown-as-coronavirus-infections-fall/ar-BB1eSYJ0>

### **Singapore warns children susceptible to virus variants, shuts schools**

Singapore warned on Sunday that the new coronavirus variants, such as the one first detected in India, were affecting more children, as the city-state prepares to shut most schools from this week and draws up plans to vaccinate youngsters. All primary, secondary and junior colleges will shift to full home-based learning from Wednesday until the end of the school term on May 28. "Some of these (virus) mutations are much more virulent, and they seem to attack the younger children," said

Education Minister Chan Chun Sing.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/singapore-warns-children-susceptible-virus-variants-shuts-schools-2021-05-17/>

### **Biden boosting world vaccine sharing commitment to 80M doses**

President Joe Biden said Monday that the U.S. will share an additional 20 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines with the world in the coming six weeks as domestic demand for shots drops and global disparities in distribution have grown more evident. The doses will come from existing production of Pfizer, Moderna or Johnson & Johnson vaccine stocks, marking the first time that U.S.-controlled doses of vaccines authorized for use in the country will be shared overseas. It will boost the global vaccine sharing commitment from the U.S. to 80 million. "We know America will never be fully safe until the pandemic that's raging globally is under control," Biden said at the White House.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-vaccine-coronavirus-pandemic-health-government-and-politics-business-829ce28a27a7584345eb357e5ee5af61>

### **G7 urged to donate excess COVID vaccines to global sharing scheme**

The head of UNICEF, the United Nations children's agency, has asked G7 countries to donate excess supplies of COVID-19 vaccines to the global COVAX sharing scheme as an emergency measure to address a severe shortfall following a curb on exports from India. India had pledged supplies of the AstraZeneca vaccine produced by its Serum Institute to COVAX but a devastating surge in cases at home has restricted exports. UNICEF, which is in charge of supplying coronavirus vaccines through COVAX, estimates the supply shortfall will reach 140 million doses by the end of May and about 190 million by the end of June. "Sharing immediately available excess doses is a minimum, essential and emergency stop-gap measure, and it is needed right now," said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore on Monday

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/17/g7-urged-to-donate-excess-covid-vaccines-to-global-sharing-scheme>

## **Maintaining Services**

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### **More Victorians eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccine from today**

Victoria has begun accelerating its vaccine rollout, opening a new mass vaccination hub as more Victorians are eligible to receive the jab from today. About 400,000 Victorians under the age of 50, who fall into select priority groups, are now eligible to get the Pfizer jab. The priority groups include carers of people aged over 70 or who have specific medical conditions; disability workers and carers; adults with specific health or mental health conditions; and high-risk workers such as emergency/defence personnel and meat processing workers.

<https://www.9news.com.au/national/coronavirus-vaccine-australia-more-victorians-eligible-to-receive-jab/f1031681-3591-45be-9820-860e591f48c5>

### **Ontario expands COVID-19 vaccine eligibility to everyone 18 and up, starting Tuesday**

The Ontario government says it will expand COVID-19 vaccination eligibility to everyone 18 and older — almost a week ahead of schedule — starting Tuesday, May 18 at 8 a.m. The acceleration for age eligibility was due to a large supply of vaccines scheduled to arrive in Canada this week. "This high number of doses is due to an early delivery of the week of May 24 shipment, to accommodate the long weekend, and is an opportunity for the province to offer an appointment to receive the vaccine to more Ontarians ahead of schedule," officials said in a press release

<https://globalnews.ca/news/7867953/ontario-covid-vaccine-eligibility-18-older-earlier-may-18/>

### **Indonesia is preparing for spike in COVID-19 cases after Idul Fitri: Health minister**

The Indonesian government is preparing for a spike in COVID-19 cases after an annual exodus of thousands of people to their hometowns for Idul Fitri and tourists sites being packed with visitors over the past few days, said Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin on Monday (May 17). Speaking at a

joint press conference with the coordinating minister for economic affairs and the head of the disaster agency, Mr Sadikin noted that there was an increase in COVID-19 cases after the previous holidays. The increase in cases following public holidays was between 30 per cent to 90 per cent. Thus, the government has prepared extra beds for COVID-19 patients this time, said the health minister.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/indonesia-prepares-for-spike-covid-19-cases-after-idul-fitri-14826858>

### **Glasgow may be facing weeks more of tougher lockdown to stem Indian variant**

Glasgow may be facing weeks more of tougher lockdown restrictions to tackle the spread of the Covid Indian variant, Scotland's national clinical director has warned ahead of lockdown being eased on Monday across most of the rest of the country. Jason Leitch said existing restrictions "may well" last longer than a week and the situation remained "fragile" as case rates continue to climb. He said Nicola Sturgeon's decision to keep Glasgow in Level 3 - only three days after stating it would go to Level 2 - was made due to past experience where delaying moves to halt the spread of Covid-19 "rarely works". The latest weekly average Covid rate in the city is 94.5 cases per 100,000 people, nearly double the Level 2 benchmark of 50.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/uknews/glasgow-may-be-facing-weeks-more-of-tougher-lockdown-to-stem-indian-variant/ar-BB1gNuFj>

### **Under-40s could get AstraZeneca vaccine after all: Plan to offer alternative Covid jab could be reversed amid fears over Indian variant**

The decision to offer under-40s an alternative jab to AstraZeneca could be reversed in light of the Indian variant, it emerged yesterday. Last month the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation decided those aged under 30 should get a different jab due to the slightly higher risk of a rare blood clot. This advice was later extended to those aged between 30 and 39 'if available and if it does not cause delays in having the vaccine'. But yesterday, for the first time, experts said this rule could be reversed to help speed up the rollout and protect more people against the Indian variant.

[https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9585957/Plan-offer-alternative-Covid-jab-AstraZeneca-40s-reversed.html?ito=social-twitter\\_dailymailUK](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9585957/Plan-offer-alternative-Covid-jab-AstraZeneca-40s-reversed.html?ito=social-twitter_dailymailUK)

## **Healthcare Innovations**

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### **Sanofi, GSK say revamped coronavirus vaccine is strong enough for final test**

Sanofi and GlaxoSmithKline on Monday reported a coronavirus vaccine they developed together met the goal of a mid-stage clinical trial, boosting the companies' research efforts five months after an earlier version of the shot disappointed in a costly setback. Results from the trial, which enrolled 722 volunteers in the U.S. and Honduras, showed the revamped vaccine spurred immune responses that were comparable to what researchers have observed following naturally occurring cases of COVID-19. Importantly, the companies said responses were strong across age groups, including in older adults whose immune systems tend to be weaker. Sanofi and GSK now plan to launch a Phase 3 study of the vaccine in the "coming weeks" and expect to enroll some 35,000 adult volunteers from a "broad range of countries." Doing so will be harder than six months ago, however, after multiple other vaccines have been made available in many countries in North America, Europe and the Middle East.

<https://www.biopharmadive.com/news/sanofi-gsk-coronavirus-protein-vaccine-phase-2/600243/>

### **SK bioscience's COVID-19 vaccine plant in South Korea gets European nod**

South Korea's SK bioscience said on Monday its COVID-19 vaccine facility had received European Union Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) certification, paving the way for exports to the bloc. The certification approves the production and processing line and quality system of SK bioscience's Andong plant, which produces COVID-19 vaccines developed by AstraZeneca Plc and Novavax Inc. It

will enable SK to export vaccines to the European markets. SK bioscience is also looking to obtain the Current Good Manufacturing Practice regulations enforced by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, it said in a statement.

<https://finance.yahoo.com/news/sk-biosciences-covid-19-vaccine-030902747.html>

### **Plasma from recovered patients found not helpful for COVID hospital patients**

Convalescent plasma given to hospitalized COVID-19 patients did not improve survival or rates of release from the hospital within 28 days, need for invasive mechanical ventilation, or death, according to the most recent findings of the Randomised Evaluation of COVID-19 Therapy (RECOVERY) trial in the United Kingdom. The results, published late last week in *The Lancet*, add to evidence that SARS-CoV-2 antibody-rich plasma taken from COVID-19 survivors doesn't benefit severely ill coronavirus patients. The RECOVERY trial is evaluating several possible treatments for hospitalized COVID-19 patients at 177 National Health Services sites.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/05/plasma-recovered-patients-found-not-helpful-covid-hospital-patients>