

Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

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Isolation Tips

Dublin charity urge public to reach out and combat loneliness being felt by elderly during Covid pandemic

A Dublin charity is urging the public to reach out and combat loneliness being felt by older people. ALONE encourages members of the public to change one person's day by reaching out to an older person in their lives whether it's a neighbour, friend, relative or someone they don't really know that well in order to #ChangeOneDay. They are calling for the public to: "Call 1 - Nominate 1 - Change 1" - call one older person, nominate a friend to do the same, and change one person's day for the better.

<https://www.dublinlive.ie/news/dublin-news/elderly-loneliness-mental-health-covid-20862253>

Covid-19: Matt Hancock hopes to scrap isolation for double-jabbed contacts

Plans to ease Covid restrictions in England on 19 July are "looking good", the prime minister has said. Boris Johnson said that was based on the efficacy of vaccines against identified variants. But he warned there could be a "rough winter for all sorts of reasons", including a resurgence of flu. It comes as the health secretary said he hoped to exempt fully vaccinated people from the requirement to isolate for 10 days when contact-traced. Asked during a visit to a laboratory in Hertfordshire whether he could rule out further lockdowns this winter, Mr Johnson said: "You can never exclude that there will be some new disease, some new horror that we simply haven't budgeted for, or accounted for.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-57552793>

Hygiene Helpers

WHO to set up mRNA COVID vaccine hub in South Africa

The World Health Organization (WHO) has said it is setting up a hub in South Africa to give companies from poor and middle-income countries the know-how and licences to produce COVID-19 vaccines, in what President Cyril Ramaphosa called an historic step to spread lifesaving technology. The "tech transfer hub" could make it possible for African companies to begin manufacturing mRNA vaccines - the advanced technology now used in shots from Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna - in as little as nine to 12 months, the WHO said.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/21/who-mrna-covid-vaccine-hub-south-africa>

COVID-19: Bolsonaro doesn't believe in social distancing, masks or vaccines. That wasn't lost on those protesting

The thud of drums and chanting filled streets across Brazil. A day of protest on the day official figures recorded over 500,000 deaths from COVID-19. The infection rates are officially between 80,000 and 100,000 people every day. But that is the recorded cases, experts say the real figure could be two, three or even four times higher. At current rates, Brazil will surpass the US for the greatest death totals; epidemiologists are warning Brazil could lose 800,000 people.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-in-brazil-the-fact-500-000-have-died-and-the-country-isnt-in-lockdown-is-too-much-for-some-to-take-12336762>

Unvaccinated Americans are at risk of an aggressive and more dangerous Covid-19 variant. These are the most vulnerable states

Some states are making great strides in vaccinating their residents against Covid-19, but the ones that are not may soon be contending with a more transmissible variant, experts say. About 45.1% of the US population is fully vaccinated against Covid-19, CDC data showed, and in 16 states and Washington, DC, that proportion is up to half. But some states -- such as Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee and Wyoming -- have fully vaccinated less than 35% of residents. More than 500 days and 600,000 deaths since the first person in the United States was reported to have died from Covid-19, experts have upheld vaccines as the key to reopening the country safely and containing the variants, many of which are more transmissible.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/06/21/us/us-coronavirus-monday/index.html>

Tokyo Olympics to allow local fans — but with strict limits

A sharply limited number of fans will be allowed to attend the Tokyo Olympics, organizers announced Monday as they tried to save some of the spirit of the Games where even cheering has been banned. Organizers set a limit of 50% capacity — up to a maximum of 10,000 fans, all of whom must be Japanese residents — for each Olympic venue, regardless of whether it is indoors or outdoors. Officials said that if coronavirus cases rise again the rules could be changed and fans could still be barred all together. Spectators from abroad were banned several months ago, and now some local fans who have tickets will be forced to give them up. The decision comes as opposition among Japanese to holding the Games in July remains high, though may be softening, and as new infections in Tokyo have begun to subside.

<https://apnews.com/article/tokyo-2020-tokyo-olympics-olympic-games-health-coronavirus-pandemic-79196dd729929f217321900ad1a1931a>

Canada: Fully vaccinated citizens face no quarantine after July 5

Canada will start cautiously lifting border restrictions for fully vaccinated citizens and other eligible people on July 5 but US and other foreign travelers will still be excluded, the government said on Monday. From 11:59pm EST on July 5 (03:59 GMT on July 6), those who have received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine will no longer have to spend time in quarantine. The relaxation of the measures applies to Canadians and permanent residents.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/21/canada-fully-vaccinated-citizens-face-no-quarantine-after-july-5>

Free COVID jabs for all Indian adults as Modi hails yoga ‘shield’

India has opened up free vaccinations to all adults in an attempt to bolster its inoculation drive, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi kicks off a muted International Yoga Day, hailing the practice’s “protective” properties against the virus. The country’s vaccination drive has significantly slowed in recent months due to a shortage of jabs and hesitancy, even as it battled a vicious surge in cases in April and May that overwhelmed the healthcare system in many places.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/21/free-covid-vaccine-india-adults-modi-yoga-day>

Companies give vaccines to workers, boosting Japan’s rollout

Thousands of Japanese companies began distributing COVID-19 vaccines to workers and their families Monday in an employer-led drive reaching more than 13 million people that aims to rev up the nation’s slow vaccine rollout. Yuka Daimaru, among the Suntory workers getting the shot on a sprawling office floor, was visibly relieved after spending more than a year worrying about the coronavirus. “I was nervous, but it didn’t hurt as much as I thought it would,” she said. “Now I don’t have to worry as much on commuter trains or at meetings.” The Tokyo-based beverage maker plans to inoculate 51,500 people, including part-time workers and employees’ families, with the Moderna vaccine.

<https://apnews.com/article/japan-coronavirus-pandemic-business-health-def4b6c1ed31609b71049db88f39fcb>

Community Activities

Young people have stepped up over the Covid-19 vaccine - for that they should be applauded

In the race between the Delta variant and the Covid vaccines, it would seem that the vaccine is at least keeping pace. Not to push the analogy too far, there was an increasing danger that the faster spread of the new mutation of the virus would mean that it would establish itself and cause a spike in cases before the usual effects of "herd immunity" started to protect the community as a whole. That was certainly evidenced in the trends in the northwest of England, Bedford and elsewhere. Even though the link between infection, hospital admissions and death have been weakened by the vaccine programme and improved treatments, there was every possibility of a third wave of Covid. Hence the decision to postpone the so-called freedom day until 19 July.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/editorials/covid-vaccine-delta-lockdown-b1869282.html>

Community Foundation distributes £2.2m in Covid-19 response

The Community Foundation for Lancashire has published a report detailed how the county raised £2.2m to deal with the Covid-19 and how those funds were used. The foundation co-ordinated corporate donors, private individuals, public sector partnerships including the Lancashire Resilience Forum, public donations and funders such as the National Emergencies Trust to raise much-needed cash. More than 320,000 people were supported by the foundation's work, including helping to address food poverty, the impact on mental health and wellbeing, service provisions to the vulnerable, and unemployment and loss of income. As lockdown continued, domestic abuse and digital exclusion were added as high priorities.

<https://www.lancashirebusinessview.co.uk/latest-news-and-features/community-foundation-distributes-22m-in-covid-19-response>

Former Swiss "Magic Mountain" TB clinics treat COVID to stay relevant

Swiss mountain sanatoriums whose fresh-air and sunlight cures once drew tuberculosis patients from across Europe are reinventing themselves for a new generation: Patients suffering from the lingering effects of COVID-19.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/medical/former-swiss-magic-mountain-tb-clinics-treat-covid-to-stay-relevant/ar-AA L8C1g>

U.S. employers wrestle with COVID vaccine requirements in regulatory "hairball"

America's largest garlic farm needs 1,000 workers to harvest its annual crop, but faces an unexpected hurdle in this year's recruitment drive: it now must document and track the COVID-19 vaccine status of these seasonal laborers. Employers in California's Santa Clara County, including Christopher Ranch, are required as of June 1 to ascertain if their workers have been vaccinated and check in every 14 days on those who say they have not or who decline to answer.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/the-great-reboot/us-employers-wrestle-with-covid-vaccine-requirements-regulatory-hairball-2021-06-21/>

Exclusive: Pandemic prompts close to 4m Londoners consider moving in quest for a better life

The pandemic and subsequent UK lockdowns have had a transformative impact on UK employees, with more than a third aged 18-34 moving house so as to secure a better quality of life. The corresponding figure for those aged 55+ is just 9 per cent, while the UK average is one-in-five, according to research from Close Brothers, shared with City A.M. this evening. It is notable that people in London are most eager to make the change, with 39 per cent - or nearly 4m people - moving or thinking to move to get that better quality of life. It is a significantly greater proportion than the next most likely regions, the East Midlands and the East of England (both 23 per cent). The region in which employees are least likely to have made the shift is the North East (9 per cent). The research highlights the extent to which the past 12 months have changed the financial plans of

employees across the UK.

<https://www.cityam.com/exclusive-pandemic-prompts-4-in-10-londoners-to-move-in-quest-for-better-life/>

Working Remotely

How managers really feel about remote work

Many companies are becoming more flexible with when and where their employees can work, but it's the direct managers and supervisors who really set the tone on remote work for their teams -- and not everyone is crazy about it. While some managers are fine with their direct reports working remotely, others would prefer more on site "face time" with their workers. They already have been put through their paces after pivoting overnight in 2020 from managing an in-person team to an all-remote one. In a recent client survey by workplace consulting firm Gartner, more than 40% of managers said they'd been feeling higher levels of stress and were logging more hours than before the pandemic. So how are they really feeling about having to pivot yet again and manage a team that will only be in the office some of the time?

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/06/21/success/managers-views-on-hybrid-work/index.html>

The problem isn't remote working - it's clinging to office-based practices

It took a pandemic to normalise remote working, and, despite the fears of many CEOs, most organisations saw no demonstrable loss of productivity. Now, the global workforce is demanding its right to retain the autonomy it gained through increased flexibility as societies open up again. Pre-pandemic, it was not uncommon for an employer to ask staff to justify their need to work from home. Post-pandemic, employees may ask employers to justify the need to come into the office. Yet many organisations are still resisting this more flexible future. They argue that employees' wellbeing is compromised by remote working, and that unless they are brought back into the office, many more will suffer from "Zoom fatigue".

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jun/21/remote-working-office-based-practices-offices-employers>

CBI and City bosses warn against giving staff legal right to work from home

The heads of the UK's largest business lobby group and two major City employers have warned against giving workers the legal right to demand remote working, claiming it would harm young employees and city centre economies. Lord Bilimoria, the president of the CBI, said that while employees should be able to request the option of working from home, flexible working arrangements must be allowed to evolve in their own way. "The worst thing possible would [be to] have any legislation that entitles people to the right to work from home," he said, speaking at the City Week conference on Monday. "They should have the right to request it. But every employer should make that decision about the mix of working from home [and the office]," he said. Downing Street confirmed last week that the government was considering legislation that would make working from home the "default" option by giving employees the right to request it.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jun/21/cbi-city-bosses-warn-against-giving-uk-staff-legal-right-work-from-home>

Why Remote Working Is Making You Paranoid (And What To Do About It)

Thanks to the sudden rise in work from home arrangements, imposter syndrome - the persistent belief that you're a fraud despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary - is increasing. The good news: it's possible to stop remote work paranoia in its tracks. By recognizing and acknowledging the increased risk of misunderstandings, missed communication, and the challenges of this new way of working, you can work towards bridging the gaps so you have exactly what you need to feel comfortable, confident, and empowered in your new working environment.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/melodywilding/2021/06/21/why-remote-working-is-making-you-paranoid-and-what-to-do-about-it/>

Remote workers work longer, not more efficiently

The return to the office is well under way, just as summer in the northern hemisphere begins. Pretty soon, people will be able to resume the habit of staring wistfully out of the window, hoping it will still be sunny at the weekend. As many workers embrace a hybrid pattern, perhaps commuting 2-3 days a week, the experiment in full-time home-working is ending. At the same time, assessments of its effectiveness are proliferating. Early surveys of employees and employers found that remote work did not reduce productivity. But a new study of more than 10,000 employees at an Asian technology company between April 2019 and August 2020 paints a different picture. The firm uses software installed on employees' computers that tracked which applications or websites were active, and whether the employee was using the keyboard or a mouse. (Shopping online didn't count.)

<https://www.economist.com/business/2021/06/10/remote-workers-work-longer-not-more-efficiently>

Virtual Classrooms

How higher education institutes can deliver a category defining experience

Before the pandemic, for many HE institutes, engagement and attendance were often synonymous: a student's participation in a course was measured by whether or not they turned up in person to lectures or classes. When no one can be physically present, we were forced to redefine what engagement truly means. As we move forward, the focus needs to be on finding the right mix of hybrid teaching which enables the best of digital convenience with rich face-to-face experiences. Done well, these innovations can also help in other areas, for example, social mobility where a hybrid style of teaching can be more accessible to students with limits to their travel.

<https://edtechnology.co.uk/comments/higher-education-institutes-deliver-category-defining-experience/>

What will public school look like for US students this fall?

As mask mandates are dropped in many public places in the United States and coronavirus vaccines become available for Americans aged 11 and up, many parents are wondering if their children will finally head back to the classroom this fall. There are still plenty of variables. Despite the fact that clinical trials are under way in younger children aged six months to 11 years, there's no firm timeline as to when vaccines will be widely available for kids — and some parents have been hesitant to have their young children receive COVID-19 shots at all.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/6/21/what-will-public-school-look-like-for-american-kids-this-fall>

Public Policies

WHO says delta is the fastest and fittest Covid variant and will 'pick off' most vulnerable

The highly contagious delta variant is the fastest and fittest coronavirus strain that will "pick off" the most vulnerable people, the World Health Organization said. Delta has the potential "to be more lethal because it's more efficient in the way it transmits between humans," the WHO's Dr. Mike Ryan said.

<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/06/21/covid-delta-who-says-variant-is-the-fastest-and-fittest-and-will-pick-off-most-vulnerable.html>

World Bank, African Union join forces to expand access to COVID-19 vaccines

The World Bank and the African Union said on Monday they would work together to accelerate COVID-19 vaccinations for up to 400 million people across Africa, bolstering efforts to vaccinate 60% of the continent's population by 2022. In a joint statement, the World Bank and the African Union said their agreement would provide needed resources to the Africa Vaccine Acquisition Task Team (AVATT) initiative, allowing countries to purchase and deploy more vaccines.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/world-bank-african-union-join-forces-expand-access-covid-19-vaccines-2021-06-22/>

Maintaining Services

Authorities say doses of the Pfizer coronavirus vaccine are set to 'ramp up' from August

The coordinator of Australia's COVID-19 vaccine rollout says supplies are being "carefully managed" ahead of a major ramping up of doses from August. Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who is quarantining at The Lodge in Canberra following an overseas trip, met via teleconference with state and territory leaders on Monday to discuss the rollout. Premiers have been critical of a shortage of supplies. Lieutenant General John Frewen, who is in charge of logistics for the vaccine rollout and briefed the national cabinet, told reporters the premiers had now been given a detailed breakdown of what supplies they can expect, including dose number forecasts.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/authorities-say-doses-of-the-pfizer-coronavirus-vaccine-are-set-to-ramp-up-from-august>

Moderna set to expand Covid-19 vaccine production

Moderna Inc is adding two new production lines at its coronavirus vaccine manufacturing plant, as it prepares to ramp up booster shot production. The US biotech firm's plans will increase overall production capacity at its Massachusetts plant by 50 per cent, the Wall Street Journal first reported. The move indicates that Moderna expects the market for Covid-19 vaccines to endure as lockdown restrictions ease but strains of the virus remain in countries around the world.

<https://www.cityam.com/moderna-set-to-expand-covid-19-vaccine-production/>

Repeat Coronavirus Vaccination Needed After 6 Months, Russian Health Minister Says

Russians who were vaccinated against the coronavirus over six months ago should revaccinate themselves for extra protection as the country grapples with the third wave of the pandemic, Health Minister Mikhail Murashko said Monday. Moscow, the epicenter of the pandemic in Russia, reported its highest-ever number of Covid-19 cases in a single day this weekend as the fast-spreading Delta variant first detected in India accounts for 90% of all infections in the capital. The variant is more resistant to Covid-19 antibodies which gradually decline after one is vaccinated or recovers from the virus.

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/06/21/repeat-coronavirus-vaccination-needed-after-6-months-russian-health-minister-says-a74287>

US extends Covid-19 travel restrictions with Canada and Mexico

The United States has extended Covid-19 restrictions on non-essential travel at land and ferry crossings with Canada and Mexico until July 21, according to a tweet from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on Sunday. "To reduce the spread of #COVID19, the United States is extending restrictions on non-essential travel at our land and ferry crossings with Canada and Mexico through July 21, while ensuring access for essential trade & travel," DHS wrote.

<https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/us-canada-mexico-covid-travel-restrictions-extended/index.html>

Portugal speeds up vaccination as COVID-19 infections rise

As the Delta coronavirus variant continues to spread, Portuguese authorities are scrambling to bring a worrying spike in cases under control and said they would accelerate vaccinations and increase testing. Just over 25% of the population has been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 in Portugal, a country of 10 million that faced its toughest battle against the virus in January. Most of those fully vaccinated are older or more vulnerable but a recent rise in cases around the populous Lisbon area led authorities to speed up the vaccination campaign, especially among younger people.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-portugal/portugal-speeds-up-vaccination-as-covid-19-infections-rise-idUSL5N2O32EX>

Healthcare Innovations

Surging infections divide UK airlines and gov't on reopening

Britain's surging coronavirus infection rate is widening a rift between airlines and health authorities

over the government's decision to maintain some of the tightest rules on travel in Europe. Travel industry officials plan to hold events on Wednesday in London, Edinburgh and Belfast to draw attention to some 195,000 jobs they say are at risk from restrictions on overseas trips. An adviser from Public Health England meanwhile warned that a fourth national lockdown may be needed this year to control the virus.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/6/21/surging-infections-divide-uk-airlines-and-govt-on-reopening>

Israeli study links pre-infection vitamin D deficiency with severe COVID-19 illness

Israeli researchers have found that pre-infection deficiency of vitamin D is associated with increased COVID-19 severity and mortality, Bar Ilan University (BIU) said Monday. The study conducted by BIU and the Galilee Medical Center (GMC) assessed the correlation using low levels of vitamin D measured prior to infection and focused on disease severity. In the study, the records of COVID-19 patients who were admitted to GMC were searched for vitamin D levels measured 14 to 730 days prior to the positive test. It was found that compared with mildly or moderately diseased patients, those with severe or critical COVID-19 disease were more likely to have severe pre-infection vitamin D deficiency with levels less than 20 ng/mL.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-06/21/c_1310020199.htm

Cuba encouraged by early efficacy results of COVID-19 vaccine

Cuba's Soberana 2 vaccine candidate has shown 62 percent efficacy with just two of its three doses, state-run biopharmaceutical corporation BioCubaFarma has said, citing preliminary data from late phase trials. Cuba, whose biotech sector has exported vaccines for decades, has five vaccine candidates in clinical trials, of which two - Soberana 2 and Abdala - are in late phase trials. "In a few weeks we should have the results for the efficacy with three doses which we expect will be superior," said Vicente Verez, director of the state-run Finlay Vaccine Institute, which developed Soberana 2. The news comes as the Caribbean's largest island is facing its worst outbreak since the start of the pandemic in the wake of the arrival of more contagious variants, setting new records of daily coronavirus cases.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/20/cuba-encouraged-by-early-efficacy-results-of-covid-19-vaccine>

Gilead's remdesivir reduces COVID-19 mortality risk- data

Gilead Sciences Inc (GILD.O) said an analysis showed its antiviral remdesivir reduced mortality rates in hospitalized patients with COVID-19 and increased the likelihood of being discharged by day 28 after a five-day course of the treatment. The drugmaker said on Monday it analyzed data from 98,654 patients from three retrospective studies of the real-world treatment of hospitalized COVID-19 patients.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/gileads-remdesivir-reduces-covid-19-mortality-risk-data-2021-06-21/>

Covid-19 vaccine side effects: Women hope more research will discover if jab causing period problems

Women around the world have been asking for several months whether early, heavy or painful periods might be an unlisted side effect to the Covid vaccine. The UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has received reports from more than 4,000 women who suffered period problems after having their jab. Some 2,734 reports are linked to the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, 1,158 related to the Pfizer/BioNtech jab, and 66 linked to the Moderna vaccine, up to May 17. The numbers roughly reflect the proportion of each vaccine in the UK's vaccination programme. The majority of issues were reported in women aged between 30 and 49 and typically involved "heavier than usual" bleeding. Other issues included delayed periods and unexpected vaginal bleeding. The watchdog said it is "closely monitoring" the reports having said a review with experts found that there was no need to list the problem as a potential side effect

alongside common issues such as a sore arm, fatigue or nausea.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/health/covid-19-vaccine-side-effects-women-hope-more-research-will-discover-if-jab-causing-period-problems-1063059>