

Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

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Isolation Tips

Sydney under strict new lockdown rules as cases soar

Millions in Sydney began their harshest lockdown since the pandemic began on Friday as COVID-19 cases spiked to record levels in Australia's largest city with state and national leaders set to meet to discuss the country's reopening plans. With Sydney, the capital of New South Wales state, struggling under record surge of cases, officials toughened curbs across eight local council areas, where most new infections were being reported, and sought the military's help to enforce lockdown rules.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/sydney-under-strict-new-lockdown-rules-cases-soar-2021-07-29/>

Cambodia to impose COVID-19 lockdowns in areas bordering Thailand

Cambodia is set to launch a lockdown in eight provinces bordering Thailand from midnight on Thursday, in a bid to prevent the spread of the Delta variant of the coronavirus in the Southeast Asian country.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/cambodia-impose-covid-19-lockdowns-areas-bordering-thailand-2021-07-29/>

India's Kerala state orders lockdown as COVID-19 infections rise

India's southern state of Kerala on Thursday announced a two-day lockdown as federal authorities planned to send experts to fight the spread of infections in the country's leading COVID-19 hotspot.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/india-reports-43509-new-covid-19-infections-2021-07-29/>

Hygiene Helpers

COVID-19: UK's daily coronavirus data 'looks a bit fishy' - as major symptom study suggests cases on the rise

Professor Tim Spector who co-founded the ZOE Covid Symptom Study app has said he is "very suspicious" over the government's data of daily cases. On Wednesday the government's figures said there was 27,734 positive cases in 24 hours, but there study has shown there is around "60,000 cases a day which are reported. Professor Spector said of the roughly 60,000 people who had tested positive according to the ZOE data, 24,000 had received at least one dose of the vaccine, whilst 36,000 had no vaccinations. The co-founder of the ZOE Covid symptom Study app said, "This 60,000 figure is still a lot of people, it's one in 84 people roughly who have at any point in time still some infection or symptoms of the condition".

<https://londonlovesbusiness.com/expert-warns-sudden-drop-in-governments-data-over-daily-cases-is-very-suspicious-a-it-is-far-higher/>

Florida mayors defy DeSantis with mask, vaccine mandates

As coronavirus cases continue to soar, two Florida mayors are announcing mask and vaccine mandates and defying the governor who is firmly opposed to any pandemic restrictions. Masks will again be required at indoor county facilities in Florida's populous Miami-Dade following new federal guidance recommending that even people vaccinated against COVID-19 should wear facial coverings. And in Orange County, home to Walt Disney World and Universal Orlando Resort, the mayor went a step further and announced all 4,200 nonunion county employees will be required to get their first coronavirus vaccine shot by the end of August, and the second shot by the end of September.

<https://apnews.com/article/health-miami-coronavirus-pandemic-247f603722fc0f1d38d0bd97a9006c25>

Covid-19: Nearly 700,000 told to isolate as 'pingdemic' grows

Nearly 700,000 alerts were sent out by the NHS Covid-19 tracing app last week telling people to self-isolate, as the impact of the "pingdemic" continues to play out across the country. Official figures show a record 689,313 alerts were sent to users of the app in England and Wales in the week to July 21, telling them they had been in close contact with someone who tested positive for the coronavirus and should self-isolate for ten days.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/covid-19-nearly-700-000-told-to-isolate-as-pingdemic-grows-2tzgvlp3c>

Covid-19 cases not reached through Test and Trace at nine-month high

The proportion of people who test positive for Covid-19 but who are not being reached by the Test and Trace system has reached a nine-month high, new figures show. Some 14.8% of people transferred to Test and Trace in England in the week to July 21 were not reached, meaning they were not able to provide details of recent close contacts.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/boris-johnson-england-department-of-health-and-social-care-house-of-commons-ian-jones-b948272.html>

Community Activities

EU health body warns against visiting popular Greek islands over COVID-19

Greece's south Aegean islands were marked dark red on the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control's COVID-19 map on Thursday after a rise in infections, meaning all but essential travel to and from the region is discouraged. The cluster of 13 islands includes Greece's most popular destinations for foreign tourists - Mykonos, Santorini and Rhodes - which, combined, draw millions of people every summer.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-health-body-warns-against-visiting-popular-greek-islands-over-covid-19-2021-07-29/>

European Union Pulls Ahead of the U.S. in Vaccinations

The 27 member states of the European Union altogether have now administered more coronavirus vaccine doses per 100 people than the United States, in another sign that inoculations across the bloc have maintained some speed throughout the summer, while they have stagnated for weeks in the United States. E.U. countries had administered 102.66 doses per 100 people as of Tuesday, while the United States had administered 102.44, according to the latest vaccination figures compiled by Our World in Data. This month, the European Union also overtook the United States in first injections; currently, 58 percent of people across the bloc have received a dose, compared with 56.5 percent in the United States.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/29/world/europe/eu-us-vaccinations.html>

Working Remotely

Call for financial support to help employers encourage remote working

In Ireland, financial assistance and training supports should be provided to help public and private sector employers encourage staff to work from home or from remote working hubs, a report from an Oireachtas committee recommends. Each Government department and agency should include a metric on remote working in its annual report, actions to achieve the 20 per cent target and further actions to increase it thereafter, it says.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/call-for-financial-support-to-help-employers-encourage-remote-working-1.4634295>

Return to Office: Companies Test Remote, Hybrid, and In-Office Work

Sixteen months after the novel coronavirus upended white-collar work, corporate America is moving

toward a shift that's shaping up to be uncertain at best, or chaotic at worst. Vaccination campaigns are approaching their limits, and it appears Covid-19 will become endemic. That's led major U.S. companies to coalesce around September to put their new in-office, hybrid, or remote working plans in action, even as the fast-spreading delta variant adds to the complexities. Beyond deciding where employees should be located, there are the thorny issues of maintaining culture, allowing flexibility, and updating policies so those already hit hardest by the pandemic—women and minorities—aren't left behind. "Policies have absolutely not caught up with reality, and we don't yet know what the reality is going to be," says Laurie Bienstock, a director at consultant Willis Towers Watson.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-07-29/return-to-office-companies-test-remote-hybrid-and-in-office-work>

Google, Facebook And Twitter Are Delaying Their Return-To-Work Plans And Requiring Vaccinations Due To The Surge Of The Delta Variant

Apple was one of the few tech companies reluctant to fully embrace remote work. Given its preference for in-office work, it was disconcerting that the iPhone giant announced it would delay its strict plans for workers to return to the office because of the sudden surge of the Delta variant. The tech giant wanted its staff back to the office at least three days a week by early September. The deadline, because of a growing wave of cases, was pushed back to October, at the earliest. At the time, I wrote, "Depending upon how the new wave plays out, Apple's decision could cause other companies to reconsider their return-to-work programs as well. Corporate executives won't want to be the lone holdouts and expose their staff to the virus. If a bellwether, such as Apple, says that they are concerned, by virtue of their decision, it's likely that others will follow suit."

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackkelly/2021/07/29/google-facebook-and-twitter-are-delaying-their-return-to-work-plans-and-requiring-vaccinations-due-to-the-surge-of-the-delta-variant/>

Work-life balance: Will the future of work be remote?

The barriers to remote work seem to be falling. An Ipsos survey in 29 countries for the World Economic Forum found 66% of workers think that employers should allow more flexible working in the future. Those in favour aim at an average of 2.5 days of work from home. In Europe, the more reluctant workers are in Belgium and in France. They are asking for an average of 1.9 days of home office. Experts say, from a European policy perspective, these trends show it's time to create conditions for hybrid work models within the single market, to avoid chaos.

<https://www.euronews.com/2021/07/29/work-life-balance-will-the-future-of-work-be-remote>

Virtual Classrooms

Virtual exchange will be a key part of internationalizing education even after COVID (opinion)

As COVID vaccine distribution increases globally and we begin to imagine a world post-pandemic, many educators are starting to consider what their classrooms may look like in the coming year. In particular, practitioners of virtual exchange and other technology-enabled forms of learning may naturally ask the question of whether or not we'll still need the practice after the pandemic. Virtual exchanges, which provide educational pathways for young people to connect with their global peers online, was around and well established long before the pandemic as a way to bring a global perspective into a classroom experience. But paradoxically, in some respects, global learning became more accessible for some during the coronavirus pandemic

<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2021/07/29/virtual-exchange-will-be-key-part-internationalizing-education-even-after-covid>

New York City Public Schools Parents At Odds As Group Demands In-Person Learning Only

There's a tug of war between parents concerned about how COVID-19 will impact New York City

schools in September. There are those calling for a remote learning option and those who want full-time, in-person learning, CBS2's Andrea Grymes reported Wednesday. On Wednesday, a virtual hearing was held at Manhattan Supreme Court Downtown where parents demanded no virtual learning at all in September. They filed a lawsuit – calling for full-time, in-person learning for all students – against the city in May.

<https://newyork.cbslocal.com/2021/07/28/new-york-city-public-schools-parents-at-odds-as-group-demands-in-person-learning-only/>

Public Policies

Biden orders tough new vaccination rules for federal workers

President Joe Biden on Thursday announced sweeping new pandemic requirements aimed at boosting vaccination rates for millions of federal workers and contractors as he lamented the “American tragedy” of rising-yet-preventable deaths among the unvaccinated. Federal workers will be required to sign forms attesting they've been vaccinated against the coronavirus or else comply with new rules on mandatory masking, weekly testing, distancing and more. The strict new guidelines are aimed at increasing sluggish vaccination rates among the huge number of Americans who draw federal paychecks — and to set an example for private employers around the country.

<https://apnews.com/article/lifestyle-joe-biden-business-health-travel-a1670ffa08f1f2eab42c675d99f1d9ad>

Japan proposes adding four regions to COVID-19 emergency - minister

Japan's government on Friday proposed states of emergency in three prefectures near Olympic host city Tokyo and the western prefecture of Osaka, a cabinet minister said, as COVID-19 cases spike to records around the country. An existing state of emergency for Tokyo should be extended to Aug. 31, Economy Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura told a panel of experts, who are expected to sign off on the proposal.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/japan-proposes-adding-four-regions-covid-19-emergency-minister-2021-07-29/>

France attacks decision to keep it on England's 'amber plus' list

A French government minister has described the decision to keep stricter quarantine measures in place for fully vaccinated travellers arriving in England from his country as discriminatory and incomprehensible. The Europe minister Clément Beaune criticised the decision after England, Scotland and Wales announced plans to significantly reduce restrictions on international travel for those who have been fully vaccinated. Northern Ireland is yet to announce whether it will follow suit.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jul/29/france-attacks-decision-to-keep-it-on-englands-amber-plus-list-covid>

Portugal lifts COVID-19 rules with three-stage plan

Portugal on Thursday announced a three-stage plan to lift COVID-19 restrictions, including scrapping a night-time curfew, as the country's vaccination rollout speeds up, helping to bring a recent surge in infections under control. From Sunday, the 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew will no longer be in force and restrictions on the opening hours of restaurants and shops will also be lifted, Prime Minister Antonio Costa told a news conference.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/portugal-lifts-night-time-curfew-covid-19-vaccination-speeds-up-2021-07-29/>

Burundi, in reversal, says it will accept COVID-19 vaccines

Burundi's government now says it will accept COVID-19 vaccines, becoming one of the last countries in the world to embrace them. But the health ministry says it will not take responsibility for any side effects they might cause. Health Minister Thaddee Ndikumana on Wednesday said the vaccines will arrive with the support of the World Bank. It was not immediately clear how many doses the East African country will receive or when. “The vaccine will be given to those who need it,” the health

minister said. The government will store the doses but will not take responsibility for any side effects, he added.

<https://apnews.com/article/africa-health-coronavirus-pandemic-burundi-4be245a578ff18a0c933ec095b823e51>

Covid-19: NI Executive to relax travel isolation rules

People who have been fully vaccinated in the EU or the US will not need to self-isolate when entering Northern Ireland from Monday. This easing of the Covid-19 travel rules is in line with changes made in England, Scotland and Wales. The Northern Ireland Executive also decided to allow international cruises to restart from 31 July. Students arriving from red-list countries will be put into managed isolation facilities. The pilot rollout for the expansion of the amber listed countries vaccinations policy is due to start on Monday 2 August.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-58004816>

Maintaining Services

Shut-down Baltimore vaccine plant cleared to return to operation by FDA

Emergent BioSolutions' Baltimore plant will reopen soon after the FDA forced a shut down in April. Plant forced to close after Johnson & Johnson vaccines were contaminated with AstraZeneca vaccine ingredients. Further investigation found unsanitary conditions and that workers were not properly trained. Once opened, the factory could produce up to 120 million vaccine doses every month

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-9840243/Shut-Baltimore-vaccine-plant-cleared-return-operation-FDA.html>

Refugees are at high risk of COVID-19 infection, but low priority for vaccines

As high-income countries move into post-vaccination life with vaccination rates of more than 80 doses per 100 people, a number we're not seeing in the headlines is the 1.1 per cent. That's the percentage of people in low-income countries who have received at least one dose. Globally, 3.83 billion vaccine doses have been administered so far, but a large vaccine gap exists between countries and continents. Africa has the lowest vaccination rate. With a global population of 7.88 billion, and only 27.1 per cent of the population vaccinated, that means 5.74 billion people globally aren't vaccinated. And the majority of those people are in South America, Asia, Oceania and Africa.

<https://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/world/refugees-are-at-high-risk-of-covid-19-infection-but-low-priority-for-vaccines/ar-AAmlIcD>

Israel to recognize Palestinian coronavirus vaccine certificates

Israel's Health Ministry will recognize the Palestinian Authority's coronavirus vaccination certificates and will allow patients to be transported from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank, after agreements were reached between the two ministries on Wednesday evening, according to Palestinian Health Minister Mai Al-Kaila. Kaila stated that the Israeli Health Ministry recognizes all the coronavirus vaccines the PA is using and will recognize its vaccination and PCR test certificates.

<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/israel-to-recognize-palestinian-coronavirus-vaccine-certificates-675212>

Myanmar jail vaccinates hundreds amid surge in COVID-19 cases

Myanmar's main prison vaccinated more than 600 inmates against COVID-19 on the first day of a drive to inoculate inmates, state media reported on Thursday, as military authorities struggle to control a wave of infections across the country. Infections have surged since June, with 4,980 cases and 365 deaths reported on Wednesday, according to health ministry data cited in media. Medics and funeral services put the toll much higher.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/myanmar-jail-vaccinates-hundreds-amid-surge-covid-19-cases-2021-07-29/>

Phuket restricts travel from other Thai regions as COVID-19 cases surge

Thailand's Phuket will ban travel from the rest of the country from Aug. 3-16 to try to stop a surge in coronavirus cases from spreading to the resort island, but overseas visitors will be largely

unaffected, the foreign ministry said on Thursday.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/thailand-reports-daily-record-17669-coronavirus-cases-2021-07-29/>

Healthcare Innovations

FDA Extends Shelf Life Of Johnson & Johnson Covid-19 Vaccine To Six Months

The U.S. Food & Drug Administration has extended the shelf life of the Johnson & Johnson single-dose Covid-19 vaccine from four-and-a-half months to six months, the drugmaker announced on Thursday, a decision that comes at a time when several health officials expressed concerns about vaccine doses expiring and going to waste.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/siladityaray/2021/07/29/fda-extends-shelf-life-of-johnson--johnson-covid-19-vaccine-to-six-months/>

Vaccinated Britons report different coronavirus symptoms - including sneezing

Vaccinated Britons are reporting sneezing as a coronavirus symptom, according to experts working to improve understanding of the virus. The three recognised Covid symptoms by the NHS are a new, persistent cough, a high temperature and a loss of taste or smell. However, people using the ZOE COVID Study App, a technology that relies on contributors logging symptoms to gather information about the virus, have reported other symptoms.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/uk-covid-symptoms-fully-vaccinated-b1892715.html>

No increased risk of blood clots after second AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine

A recent study has found that there is no increased risk of developing blood clots after receiving a second dose of AstraZeneca's coronavirus vaccine and that the rates were comparable to those in healthy, unvaccinated people. AstraZeneca's coronavirus vaccine received a lot of negative attention in April due to blood clots being reported following a first shot, resulting in many governments temporarily putting a stop to administering it, and later setting a minimum age limit to minimise the risk of fatal side effects.

<https://www.brusselstimes.com/belgium/179419/no-increased-risk-of-blood-clots-after-second-astrazeneca-coronavirus-vaccine/>

Israelis age 60 and up to start getting third coronavirus vaccine dose next week

Health Ministry Director-General Nachman Ash on Thursday told health management organizations to start giving a third COVID-19 vaccine shot to elderly Israelis from the beginning of next week. Ash told the HMOs the shots should be given to those aged 60 and older. His order came hours after Prime Minister Naftali Bennett met with top health officials to review an expert panel's recommendations that older Israelis receive a third shot.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/israelis-age-60-and-up-to-start-getting-third-coronavirus-vaccine-dose-next-week/>

COVID-19 survivors are three times as likely to report memory issues eight months later compared to those who test negative as researchers say virus is not a 'mild disease'

A new study found 11% of people who had mild cases of COVID still experienced memory problems eight months later. Comparatively, only around 4% of people who tested negative are reporting similar memory issues. Researchers are worried about findings, say virus might not be a mild condition and could affect people long-term. Past research has found that around 80% of people with serious COVID cases develop cognitive issues

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-9839773/People-test-positive-COVID-19-report-cognitive-issues-eight-months-later.html>