

Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

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Isolation Tips

Isolation alerts from Covid-19 app continue to fall following 'logic' tweak

The number of people instructed to self-isolate by the NHS Covid-19 app has continued to fall, reaching its lowest number since the week to June 23. A total of 261,453 alerts were sent to users of the app for England and Wales in the week to August 11, down by 18% on the previous week when 317,519 were pinged. The latest Government figures cover the first full week when the "logic" behind the tool was tweaked to alert fewer people who have been in close contact with someone that tested positive for coronavirus.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/nhs-wales-england-b951473.html>

Singapore to pilot home isolation for fully vaccinated COVID-19 patients

Singapore would pilot a home isolation for fully vaccinated COVID-19 patients with mild or no symptoms soon, the Ministry of Health said in a press release on Thursday. With much more local and global data showing that fully vaccinated COVID-19 patients have a much lower risk of developing severe disease, "we are piloting a home-centric care model" for the management of COVID-19 patients with mild or no symptoms from Aug. 30, said the ministry in a statement. These patients will spend the first few days in a medical facility before moving to home isolation. By then, the viral loads of vaccinated patients would have dropped, said MOH.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/asiapacific/2021-08/19/c_1310137259.htm

Hygiene Helpers

Op-Ed: As a doctor in a COVID unit, I'm running out of compassion for the unvaccinated. Get the shot

My patient sat at the edge of his bed gasping for air while he tried to tell me his story, pausing to catch his breath after each word. The plastic tubes delivering oxygen through his nose hardly seemed adequate to stop his chest from heaving. He looked exhausted. He had tested positive for the coronavirus 10 days ago. He was under 50, mildly hypertensive but otherwise in good health. Eight days earlier he started coughing and having severe fatigue. His doctor started him on antibiotics. It did not work. Fearing his symptoms were worsening, he started taking some hydroxychloroquine he had found on the internet. It did not work.

<https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2021-08-17/vaccinated-covid-doctor-shot>

Australians aged 16-39 can get Covid-19 Pfizer vaccine from August 30, Prime Minister announces

All Australians will be able to get the Pfizer vaccine from August 30, PM said. The move has raised fears that many will cancel AstraZeneca appointments. Scott Morrison urged young Australians to get any vaccine they can right now. As of Thursday 28.2 per cent of Australians over 16 have been fully vaccinated

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9907511/Australians-aged-16-39-Covid-19-Pfizer-vaccine-August-30-Prime-Minister-announces.html>

Biden calls for schools to be allowed COVID mask mandates

US President Joe Biden continues to be at odds with governors who are outlawing school mask mandates as the country's Delta (B1617.2) surge continues, ordering the Department of Education

to support schools seeking such mandates. COVID-19 hospitalizations for children, meanwhile, have hit a new record, up 30% from the nation's previous peak. Overall, the United States reported 137,815 new COVID-19 cases and 1,145 deaths yesterday, according to the Johns Hopkins COVID-19 tracker. This brings the country's total cases to 37,198,723, including 624,567 deaths.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/08/biden-calls-schools-be-allowed-covid-mask-mandates>

Community Activities

Covid-19: How Kerala kept itself above water in India's devastating second wave

India is one of the worst hit countries in the pandemic, but one state has fared comparatively well. Kamala Thiagarajan asks what Kerala did differently. India's first confirmed case of covid-19 was detected in the southern state of Kerala on 27 January 2020. Despite being one of the worst affected states—with over three million recorded cases, a quarter of infections in India—Kerala has the lowest covid death rate in the country at 0.4%, less than a third of the national average of 1.3%. As of 8 August, Kerala had 17 654 recorded deaths.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/374/bmj.n2005>

What is being done to distribute COVID-19 vaccines globally?

What is being done to distribute COVID-19 vaccines globally? Several groups are working to get shots to poor countries, but they're falling far short of what's needed to curb outbreaks around the world. Among the efforts is COVAX, which relies on donations from rich countries and private funders. The group has missed its own distribution targets largely because it didn't have the resources to secure vaccine supplies early on in the pandemic. As of mid-August, COVAX has distributed about 207 million doses to 138 countries and territories. That's compared with more than 417 million doses distributed in just the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<https://apnews.com/article/europe-health-coronavirus-pandemic-philanthropy-united-nations-181620f70b939bac42e942e1b7cc1925>

Gulf Coast's beloved 'Redneck Riviera' now a virus hotspot

Tourists and servers alike dance atop tables and in the aisles at one restaurant on the "Redneck Riviera," a beloved stretch of towns along the northern Gulf Coast where beaches, bars and stores are packed. Yet just a few miles away, a hospital is running out of critical care beds, its rooms full of unvaccinated people fighting for their lives. On maps that show virus "hot spots" in red, this part of the U.S. coast is glowing like a bad sunburn. And a summer of booming tourism that followed the lockdowns and travel restrictions of 2020 is making the turn toward fall with only a few signs of slowing down.

<https://apnews.com/article/lifestyle-health-coronavirus-pandemic-c341a0e0ab5e9ecc3b3eedc855f33513>

Working Remotely

Facebook pushes VR for remote work but practicality, cost and nausea may stand in its way

Facebook believes it has developed a tool for the future of work: a virtual reality app that allows remote workers the chance to collaborate in the same virtual space. But it might take a long time for the social media company to convince massive numbers of workers to switch to VR for meetings, analysts say. On Tuesday, the company unveiled what it calls "Horizon Workrooms" on the Oculus Quest 2 VR headset. The app, which is still being tweaked, allows workers to create an avatar, collaborate with others on a whiteboard, stream what's on their laptop, take notes and interact with co-workers who video conference into the virtual room — all while sitting at their real-life workspace.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/08/19/facebook-vr-app-remote-workers/>

Wall Street Return to Office: Coders Allowed More Remote Work Than Bankers

As Goldman Sachs's top brass sounded the alarm of a return to pre-pandemic office life, one group of workers was reassured they'd get to keep some of their treasured flexibility. The Wall Street firm's coders can continue to work from home two days a week, according to people briefed on the firm's plans. They're not alone. Across financial services, the software engineers who have been at the heart of talent wars are winning more freedom than the bankers they work with. Wells Fargo & Co. told employees last month that work from home will be capped at two days a week for many roles, but said it would make an exception for most of its technology team. Citigroup Inc. chalks up some of its recent wins around tech recruiting to the firm's greater flexibility around remote work.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-08-19/forget-foosball-tables-banks-appeal-to-coders-with-remote-work>

Can I work from...abroad? Flexibility is now top priority of senior London job applicants, survey reveals

Flexibility on working remotely – even from abroad – has become the top priority of senior London job applicants since the start of the pandemic, a new survey has revealed. The experience of working from home over 18 months of lockdowns and travel restrictions has brought about a dramatic change of thinking about what employees want from a job, according to the report from headhunters Hanson Search. A flexible working policy is now often valued more highly than salary, bonus structure, social responsibility and diversity and inclusion when looking for a new role.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/flexible-working-job-applicants-london-survey-hanson-search-b951442.html>

Virtual Classrooms

Virtual Learning Was Better for Some Kids. Here's What Teachers Learned From Them

Most students didn't make much progress—or flailed—in online learning during the pandemic. But a subset who may have struggled with in-person learning in the past actually thrived. Now many of those students, some of whom have learning and thinking differences or mental health conditions like social anxiety, must return to the traditional classroom, an environment that did not work for them before COVID. So educators around the country are thinking about how they can adjust their practice, or their approach with individual kids, to help these students retain the success they experienced online now that they are back in school.

<https://www.edweek.org/leadership/virtual-learning-was-better-for-some-kids-heres-what-teachers-learned-from-them/2021/08>

Public Policies

Biden administration's push for COVID boosters raises concerns about the science and morality of the plan

As the delta variant surges and Americans—even those who are vaccinated—shudder at the idea of guarding anew against the coronavirus, a booster vaccine seems to offer some peace of mind. But how much added protection does it really offer? Many scientists believe the question can't yet be answered. Despite this, the Biden administration revealed on Wednesday that it is preparing to offer booster shots to the public the week of Sept. 20, pending the FDA's endorsement.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/u-s-rush-to-endorse-covid-boosters-raises-concerns-about-process-and-morality>

'Our worst nightmare realized:' Investors, WHO slam J&J for exporting COVID shots produced in Africa

As Africa's COVID-19 vaccinations lagged behind the rest of the world, Aspen Pharmacare's manufacturing facility in South Africa scored a deal to help boost production of Johnson & Johnson's single-shot jab for the region. But it turns out that most of the J&J shots bottled and packaged at Aspen's site are going to Europe, not Africa, The New York Times reported earlier this week. The news has since swiftly drawn the ire of health advocates and one outspoken investor group, which

warned that J&J's reputation and its "social license to operate" are now at risk. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters on Wednesday that he was "stunned" by the revelation, urging J&J to prioritize shipments to Africa instead.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/our-worst-nightmare-realized-shareholders-slam-j-j-for-reportedly-exporting-covid-shots>

Israel extends Covid restrictions to three-year-olds as cases surge

Israel is now requiring anyone over the age of three to show proof of vaccination or a negative Covid-19 test before entering many indoor spaces, as it tackles a sharp rise in infections. Restaurants, cafes, museums, libraries, gyms and pools are among the venues covered by the "Green Pass" system. However, proof of immunity is not needed to go into shops or malls. The country's Covid-19 tsar said it was "at war" with the virus despite its world-leading vaccination programme.

[https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-58245285?at_campaign=64&at_custom1=%5Bpost+type%5D&at_custom2=4F1C5AA4-00B6-11EC-8653-](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-58245285?at_campaign=64&at_custom1=%5Bpost+type%5D&at_custom2=4F1C5AA4-00B6-11EC-8653-BA11BECD475E&at_custom3=BBC+News&at_custom2=facebook_page&at_medium=custom7)

[BA11BECD475E&at_custom3=BBC+News&at_custom2=facebook_page&at_medium=custom7](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-58245285?at_campaign=64&at_custom1=%5Bpost+type%5D&at_custom2=4F1C5AA4-00B6-11EC-8653-BA11BECD475E&at_custom3=BBC+News&at_custom2=facebook_page&at_medium=custom7)

Maintaining Services

Texas health officials warn of full ICUs as state grapples with worsening Covid-19 surge

The latest surge in Covid-19 hospitalizations this summer is having a deepening effect in Texas, a state that has seen its leadership rebuke steps such as mandatory mask wearing, yet now faces hospitals stretched to capacity with sick patients. And amid both the crises at health care facilities as well as court battles raging over the legality of safety measures in schools, recent news of Gov. Greg Abbott's positive test for Covid-19 has punctuated messaging from health officials that Texans need to remain vigilant during the pandemic. The state's Department of State Health Services said Texas is in "one of its worst fights" it has faced with Covid-19, and mortuary trailers were requested this month as a preparatory maneuver.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/19/us/texas-covid-icu-beds-mask-mandate/index.html>

Oregon hospitals near breaking point as COVID-19 surges

Just 41 intensive care unit beds were available in Oregon on Wednesday as COVID-19 cases continue to climb and hospitals near capacity in a state that was once viewed as a pandemic success story. Oregon, which earlier had among the lowest cases per capita, is now shattering its COVID-19 hospitalization records day after day. Oregon — like Florida Arkansas and Louisiana — has had more people in the hospital with COVID-19 than at any other point in the pandemic. As of Wednesday, 850 coronavirus patients were hospitalized in Oregon — surpassing the state's record, which was set the previous day. Before this month, the hospitalization record was 622 in November, during a winter surge and when vaccines were not yet available

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/oregon-kate-brown-icu-portland-florida-b1904994.html>

South Africa to open up COVID-19 vaccinations to 18-35 year olds from Friday

South Africa will open up COVID-19 vaccinations to those aged between 18 and 35 years old from Friday, the government said in a statement, as it tries to ramp up its immunisation drive. The country has recorded the most coronavirus infections and deaths on the African continent, but it has so far only fully vaccinated less than 8% of its population of 60 million.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/south-africa-open-up-covid-19-vaccinations-18-35-year-olds-friday-2021-08-19/>

Healthcare Innovations

Vaccines show declining effectiveness against infection overall but strong protection against hospitalization amid delta variant

Three studies published Wednesday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that

protection against the coronavirus given by vaccines declined in the midsummer months when the more contagious delta variant rose to dominance in the United States. At the same time, protection against hospitalization was strong for weeks after vaccination, indicating the shots will generate immune fighters that stave off the worst effects of the virus and its current variations.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/08/18/covid-vaccine-effectiveness/>

If you live in a state with a low vaccination rate, you're 4 times more likely to be hospitalized and more than 5 times more likely to die

A vast majority of US residents live in an area with high Covid-19 transmission, but hospitalization and death rates are significantly higher in states with the lowest vaccination rates. In the 10 states with the lowest vaccination rates, fewer than 41% of their residents have been fully vaccinated. In the 10 states with the highest vaccination rates, more than 58% of their residents have been inoculated against coronavirus. Hospitalization rates in those bottom 10 states are nearly four times higher, and death rates are more than 5.5 times higher than in the top 10 states, according to a CNN analysis of federal data.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/18/health/us-coronavirus-wednesday/index.html>

Pfizer vaccine effectiveness declines quicker than AstraZeneca, says study

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is initially more effective against the Delta coronavirus variant than the Oxford-AstraZeneca jab, but this protection then declines at a quicker rate, new research has shown. Scientists from the University of Oxford have confirmed that the general performance of the two jabs is diminished by Delta, compared to the previously dominant Alpha variant, with vaccinated people likely to pass the virus on to others. However, two doses of either jab still provides at least the same level of protection acquired through natural infection, and there is not yet clear evidence to suggest that the vaccines are failing to keep people infected with Delta out of hospital.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/covid-vaccine-delta-pfizer-astrazeneca-b1904782.html>

Covid Vaccines Are Less Effective Against Delta, Large Study Finds

Covid-19 vaccines are less effective against the delta variant, according to results in the U.K. from one of the largest real-world studies into the efficacy of the shots. Pfizer Inc. and BioNTech SE's messenger RNA vaccine lost effectiveness in the first 90 days after full vaccination, though that shot and the one made by AstraZeneca Plc still staved off a majority of Covid infections. When vaccinated people did get infected with delta, they were shown to have similar levels of virus in their bodies as those who hadn't had shots. This suggests that vaccinating large portions of a population might not protect those who don't get inoculated, casting doubt on the idea of achieving herd immunity.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-08-18/covid-vaccines-are-less-effective-against-delta-in-u-k-study>