

Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

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Isolation Tips

East Belfast community worker calls for communities to come together to combat loneliness

A East Belfast community worker has said he was shocked to see the levels of loneliness among elderly and vulnerable people during the pandemic. Gareth Wright, 21, has led a Covid support group in the Ardcarne area where he and a group of 12 volunteers have helped people with shopping and food deliveries as well as making reassuring phonecalls to keep in touch with those they are helping. However, during that time he says that he was shocked to see how lonely and vulnerable some in his community had become and wanted to encourage others to try and make an effort to tackle this in their areas.

<https://www.belfastlive.co.uk/news/belfast-news/east-belfast-community-worker-calls-21303113>

Hygiene Helpers

Classrooms in England to get air quality monitors to help combat Covid

Classrooms in England are to be fitted with air quality monitors when state schools and colleges reopen after the summer holidays, in an effort to improve ventilation and combat the spread of Covid. The decision announced by the education secretary, Gavin Williamson, comes after a vociferous campaign by school staff unions for better ventilation, with research suggesting that the Covid virus mainly transmits via airborne particles, making enclosed spaces likely breeding grounds for infection. Starting in September, the Department for Education (DfE) will spend £25m on providing 300,000 CO2 monitors to alert staff and students if CO2 levels rise, meaning that fresh air is failing to circulate.

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/aug/21/classrooms-england-monitor-air-quality-effort-combat-covid-better-ventilation>

San Francisco's new rule: Proof of vaccine or no dining in

San Francisco became the first major city in the nation to require proof of full vaccination against COVID-19 on Friday for people dining inside restaurants, working out in gyms or attending indoor concerts

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/vaccine-checks-beginning-san-francisco-eateries-bars-79554364>

Popular blue surgical face masks do NOT stop people from being infected with COVID-19

University of Waterloo researchers find most cloth masks are only 10% effective. Researchers warn most cloth masks do not cover the face properly. N95 or KN95 masks were found to be the most effective at filtering aerosols. Study also found that even 'moderate ventilation' matches the best of masks in terms of protection against COVID-19. Mask debate remains contentious in the country as delta variant spreads

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9914969/Popular-blue-surgical-face-masks-NOT-stop-people-infected-COVID-19.html>

Lockdowns or vaccines? 3 Pacific nations try diverging paths

Cheryl Simpson was supposed to be celebrating her 60th birthday over lunch with friends but instead found herself confined to her Auckland home. The discovery of a single local COVID-19 case in New Zealand was enough for the government to put the entire country into strict lockdown this

past week. While others might see that as draconian, New Zealanders generally support such measures because they worked so well in the past. "I'm happy to go into lockdown, even though I don't like it," said Simpson, owner of a day care center for dogs that is now closed because of the precautions. She said she wants the country to crush the latest outbreak: "I'd like to knock the bloody thing on the head."

<https://apnews.com/article/health-coronavirus-pandemic-b85fc82e35f50f50be0bb8283f45a30de0>

Coronavirus Australia: Vaccinated Australians to be allowed back into pubs, restaurants and gyms

Fully vaccinated NSW residents could soon be able to get the jump on lockdown. NSW preparing to introduce vaccine passport system when jab targets reached. Gladys Berejiklian is expected to unveil her so-called Freedom Plan next week. The proposal could see outdoor dining, gyms and beer gardens open back up. But the jab passport plan is not likely to come into effect until early October

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9908619/Coronavirus-Australia-Vaccinated-Australians-allowed-pubs-restaurants-gyms.html>

The Big-Government-Conservative War on Masks

Crises have the power to expose tensions within ideologies, and the current pandemic has made some of those in contemporary American conservatism vividly apparent.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/08/big-government-conservative-vaccines-masks/619792/>

Community Activities

French protesters rally against COVID health pass

Thousands of people have marched in cities across France to protest the COVID-19 health pass that is now required to access restaurants and cafes, cultural venues, sports arenas and long-distance travel. For a sixth straight weekend, opponents on Saturday denounced what they see as a restriction of their freedom. Many criticised the measure, claiming the French government was implicitly making vaccines obligatory and unfairly restricting the rights of the unvaccinated.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/21/french-virus-health-pass-in-full-use-but-protests-continue>

'Unmute us': Marchers demand return of Dutch music festivals

Dutch music fans have been banned for months from going to large-scale festivals due to coronavirus restrictions. On Saturday, the festivals came to them. Hundreds of performers and festival organizers held marches through six Dutch cities on Saturday to protest what they argue are unfair restrictions that have forced the cancellation of summer music festivals and other events. Thousands of people attended one of the "Unmute Us" marches in Amsterdam, walking and dancing behind a convoy of trucks carrying DJs and sound systems pumping out music.

<https://apnews.com/article/entertainment-business-music-health-arts-and-entertainment-a49e01561edc13641b1079dd2145fda6>

French scientist who pushed unproven Covid drug may be forced from post

The French scientist who promoted the discredited hydroxychloroquine treatment for Covid-19 backed by Donald Trump faces being pushed out of the infectious diseases institute he founded, amid concerns from key members over its role in feeding conspiracy theories and an investigation by regulators into its clinical studies. Didier Raoult has built a worldwide following throughout the pandemic for his support of the malaria drug despite its failure in randomised control trials. Multiple studies, including by the Recovery trial and the World Health Organisation, have found hydroxychloroquine to be ineffective in treating Covid-19.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/19/french-scientist-who-pushed-unproven-covid-drug-hydroxychloroquine-may-be-forced-from-post>

Working Remotely

Remote Work May Now Last for Two Years, Worrying Some Bosses

With the latest wave of return-to-office delays from Covid-19, some companies are considering a new possibility: Offices may be closed for nearly two years. That is raising concerns among executives that the longer people stay at home, the harder or more disruptive it could be to eventually bring them back. Many employees developed new routines during the pandemic, swapping commuting for exercise or blocking hours for uninterrupted work. Even staffers who once bristled at doing their jobs outside of an office have come to embrace the flexibility and productivity of at-home life over the past 18 months, many say. Surveys have shown that enthusiasm for remote work has only increased as the pandemic has stretched on.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/remote-work-may-now-last-for-two-years-worrying-some-bosses-11629624605>

How your employer may be tracking your remote work

The pandemic pushed many into work-from-home setups, and companies turned to employee data to keep tabs on their workforces. Your company can get access to almost everything you do electronically, and monitoring software makes that data easy to collect and analyze. As some employees see work-from-home time extended because of the delta variant spreading across the world, reliance on employee tracking is staying steady at lockdown-level highs, say executives at monitoring software firms. Your company may or may not be collecting data on your every move, but it certainly has the capability. The best way to know for sure is to ask, says Tom Kelly, CEO of consumer privacy firm IDX.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/08/20/work-from-home-computer-monitoring/>

Leo Varadkar hails opportunity to make remote working part of normal life

Leo Varadkar has said Ireland now has an opportunity to make remote working a major part of working life. The Tanaiste said the Government will pass a law this year that will provide employees with a right to request remote working arrangements. The Government, Mr Varadkar said, will also introduce a legally admissible code of practice on the right to disconnect from work - a code that would cover phone calls, emails and switch-off time.

<https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/politics/leo-varadkarhails-opportunity-to-make-remote-working-part-of-normal-life-40770698.html>

To Gen Zers Working From Home, the Office Is a Remote Concept

More than a year into the great remote-work experiment, a new breed of young professionals has emerged: those who have never worked in an office. Some young workers are disappointed they have yet to experience working side-by-side with colleagues and the spontaneous collaboration and coaching that can come from being in the same space. Others say they have gotten accustomed to the virtual world and don't feel they are missing much. Regardless, some workplace and management experts say that missing out on an office experience so early in a career may hurt mentorship prospects and the development of interpersonal office skills, and that managers should make an extra effort to offset those risks.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/to-gen-zers-working-from-home-the-office-is-a-remote-concept-11629538204>

Virtual Classrooms

Make online teaching a catalyst for better classroom teaching and learning

Online instruction en masse has gone through its trial by fire for almost two years and has proved its viability. Sure, it has drawbacks — screen fatigue, family fracture, unequal access to technology, widening performance gaps — but, by and large, remote education succeeded as a practical and scalable alternative to in-person teaching. Besides, there were advantages to virtual classrooms: “anytime, anywhere” flexibility, dispensing with the need to get ready and arrive in schools on time, and similar school-day overheads. Second, and more importantly, online teaching has raised the bar for classroom teaching. If online teaching was good, in-person teaching must be better, a fervent

wish of parents heightened by the pandemic.

<https://www.mercurynews.com/2021/08/22/make-online-teaching-a-catalyst-for-better-classroom-teaching-and-learning/>

Public Policies

UK scientists look at reducing boosters to save vaccine for rest of the world

Scientists in Britain are examining whether smaller doses of Covid vaccine could be used as part of booster programmes, amid hopes that the approach could also increase the supply of jabs across the world. The use of so-called “fractional doses” has been proposed as a way of ensuring that precious supplies can immunise as many people as possible in parts of the world where there are shortages, while still providing high levels of protection from the virus.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/22/uk-scientists-look-at-halving-boosters-to-save-vaccine-for-rest-of-the-world>

UK travel restrictions for Covid-19 should be tougher, most voters think as 38% back fourth lockdown in future

Most Britons want the Government to impose tougher restrictions at the UK’s border to stop Covid-19 cases and new variants being imported from abroad, a new survey has revealed. The poll for i by Redfield & Wilton Strategies suggests that fewer than one in 10 people have travelled abroad for a summer holiday this year. It also shows that nearly 38 per cent of people would be prepared to support a fourth nationwide lockdown if the pressure on hospital from coronavirus cases reaches similar levels to the previous peaks.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/uk-travel-restrictions-covid-19-should-be-tougher-most-voters-back-fourth-lockdown-1160712>

Victoria records 65 new cases of COVID-19, new case in regional town

Of the 65 cases recorded on Saturday, only 12 were isolating for all of their infectious periods. Authorities say they expect clusters in Shepparton and at the Royal Melbourne Hospital to keep growing. Victoria Police Chief Commissioner Shane Patton has condemned violent protesters who attacked police yesterday

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-08-22/victoria-records-65-new-cases-of-covid/100397232>

New Zealand reports 21 local COVID-19 cases, more expected

New Zealand recorded 21 new cases of COVID-19 on Saturday, with Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern warning the number will go higher in the next few days and urging the Pacific nation to adhere to the lockdown rules. The infections in the community outbreak of the highly transmissible Delta variant now total 51. Of the 21 new cases, 18 are in the largest city, Auckland, and three in the capital, Wellington.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/new-zealand-reports-21-locally-acquired-covid-19-cases-2021-08-21/>

Australian PM Morrison defends lockdown strategy as daily cases hit record

Australia will stick to its lockdown strategy against the coronavirus until at least 70% of its population is fully vaccinated, but after that it will have to start living with the virus, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said on Sunday.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/australias-pm-morrison-defends-lockdown-strategy-until-majority-vaccinated-2021-08-21/>

FDA Issues ‘You Are Not a Cow’ Warning After Livestock Drug Use

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued a strong and unusual warning on Saturday: “You are not a horse. You are not a cow. Seriously, y’all. Stop it.” The FDA was reacting to alarms from Mississippi, the state with the worst outbreak in the U.S., that people have been taking ivermectin to treat or prevent Covid-19. The drug is often used against parasites in livestock.

https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-08-21/fda-issues-you-are-not-a-cow-warning-after-livestock-drug-use?utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=socialflow-organic&utm_medium=social&utm_content=business&cmpid=socialflow-twitter-business

Public health officials anticipate smoother rollout for coronavirus vaccine booster shots

Officials in the greater Washington region say the rollout of booster shots to millions of vaccinated people will be much different from the early days of the coronavirus vaccinations, when doses were in short supply and people scoured the Internet for scarce appointments. Third doses are already being given out to those who are immunocompromised, and President Biden has said the general population will be eligible for booster shots starting next month.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/covid-booster-dc-maryland-virginia/2021/08/19/c2ca551e-0101-11ec-85f2-b871803f65e4_story.html

Maintaining Services

Louisiana sees 'astronomical' number of new Covid-19 cases, governor says

With the continued spread of the more infectious Delta variant, health and elected officials warned that hospitals across the country are reaching critical levels of Covid-19 patients, especially in areas with lower vaccination rates. Overall hospitalizations are continuing to increase across Alabama as the "pandemic of unvaccinated people continues," state health officer Dr. Scott Harris said on Friday. Alabama hospitals have a negative capacity of ICU beds available, he said, and the state is seeing the highest number of Covid-19 cases among children than at any other time during the pandemic.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/21/health/us-coronavirus-saturday/index.html>

Covid-19: Vaccination 'big push' continues in Northern Ireland

The Department of Health is continuing its push to get more people in Northern Ireland vaccinated against Covid-19 with mass vaccination walk-in centres reopening on Sunday. There were some long queues on Saturday on the first day of what has been billed as the Big Jab Weekend. No official figures have yet been released, but the total number of jabs administered was in the thousands. It comes as 11 more deaths with Covid-19 were reported in the past 24 hours. Another 1,485 cases were also reported.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-58294894>

South Africans form long queues as COVID-19 jabs opened to all adults

South Africans formed queues hundreds of metres long to get their COVID-19 shots on Friday, after the government made vaccinations available to all adults in order to hasten a rollout beset by challenges and delays. South Africa has been battered by three coronavirus waves, infecting at least 2.65 million people, killing 78,000 - by far the continent's worst toll - and pummeling an already struggling economy with lockdowns and travel restrictions.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/south-africans-form-long-queues-covid-19-jabs-opened-all-adults-2021-08-20/>

Child Covid-19 hospitalizations soar, filling pediatric wings, data show

Two weeks ago, only two or three children a day would come into Dr. Nick Hysmith's hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, with Covid-19, usually ones who were admitted for other reasons, like broken bones. This week, he is seeing as many as 28 children under 18 a day, some of them landing in the intensive care unit.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/child-covid-19-hospitalizations-new-high-august-2021-n1277119>

PM has third COVID-19 shot as Israel extends booster campaign

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett received a third shot of Pfizer/BioNtech's COVID-19 vaccine on Friday, after Israel extended its booster campaign for people over 40 to try to curb the Delta coronavirus variant. New cases in Israel have surged since Delta's emergence and Bennett, 49, has

sought to avoid an economically painful national lockdown by ramping up third doses.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/pm-has-third-covid-19-shot-israel-extends-booster-campaign-2021-08-20/>

English schools told to delay seeking help with small Covid outbreaks

Universities, schools and nurseries in England have been advised to delay seeking help in dealing with Covid-19 outbreaks until a cluster involving as many as 10% of staff, students or children have contracted the virus. A new "contingency framework" issued by the Department for Education (DfE) to all education settings in England – ranging from universities and colleges to after-school tuition and youth clubs – advises that preventive measures such as wearing masks or remote learning should be used only after discussion with public health officers, once a "threshold" of infections has been reached.

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/aug/19/english-schools-told-to-delay-seeking-help-with-small-covid-outbreaks>

Healthcare Innovations

US officials reviewing possibility Moderna vaccine is linked to higher risk of uncommon side effect than previously thought

Moderna's coronavirus vaccine for adolescents has yet to be authorized by federal health officials in part because they are investigating emerging reports that the shots may be associated with a higher risk of a heart condition in younger adults than previously believed, according to two people familiar with the review who emphasized the side effect still probably remains very uncommon. The investigation, which involves the Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is focusing on Canadian data that suggests the Moderna vaccine may carry a higher risk of myocarditis for young people than the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, especially for males below the age of 30 or so.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/08/19/moderna-vaccine-myocarditis/>

Russian developer ready to launch clinical trials of nasal spray coronavirus vaccine

Researchers at Russia's Gamaleya Center have completed pre-clinical trials of a nasal spray coronavirus vaccine and are ready to launch clinical trials, the center's Director Alexander Gintsburg told TASS. "There has been serious progress made in terms of the nasal spray vaccine, pre-clinical trials are over. We are ready to move on to clinical trials," he said. According to Gintsburg, the nasal spray vaccine consists of the second component of the Sputnik V vaccine. The Gamaleya Center's director said earlier that clinical trials could begin in late 2021 or early 2022 and the vaccine was expected to be approved in 2022.

<https://tass.com/society/1328565>

COVID-19: Antibody testing programme to be rolled out across the UK for COVID positive people

An antibody testing programme for people who have tested positive for COVID-19 is to be launched across the UK. The government's new programme is intended to produce data on antibody protections for people following infection by different coronavirus variants. From Tuesday, anyone aged 18 or over in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, will be able to opt in to the programme when receiving a PCR test.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-antibody-testing-programme-to-be-launched-uk-wide-12387201>

India gives emergency approval for world's first COVID-19 DNA jab

The vaccine, ZyCoV-D, uses a section of genetic material from the virus that gives instructions as either DNA or RNA to make the protein that the immune system responds to.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/20/india-gives-emergency-approval-for-worlds-first-covid-19-dna-jab>

UK regulator approves 'first of its kind' Covid antibody treatment

The antibody cocktail used to treat Donald Trump for Covid has been approved by the UK's medicines regulator, becoming the first treatment in Britain using artificial antibodies to tackle the virus. The drug, developed by the US biotech company Regeneron, has received the backing of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). Clinical trials showed it helped to prevent Covid infection as well as to reduce the risk of hospitalisation or symptoms in severe cases, when given soon after exposure. Known as Ronapreve, it is the first artificial antibody drug of its type to be approved in the UK, which was hailed by the health secretary, Sajid Javid, as "fantastic news". Javid said he hoped it could be available for NHS patients as soon as possible.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/20/uk-approves-rollout-covid-antibody-treatment-ronapreve-clinical-trials>

Multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children following COVID-19

Researchers from the Mount Sinai Health System, NY, present the first genome-wide study to investigate the cause of a rare but severe inflammatory syndrome in children following SARS-CoV-2 infection. RNA sequencing of blood samples revealed that certain cells of the immune system were at lower levels in children who developed multisystem inflammatory syndrome after SARS-CoV-2 infection. The findings may provide scientists with a new pathway toward the treatment of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C).

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/covid-19-rare-inflammatory-syndrome-in-children-examined-in-new-study>

9,000 Covid cases linked to Euro 2020 games in mass events scheme

More than 9,000 Covid infections were linked to Euro 2020 football games monitored for the government's mass events test scheme, and scientists have said the tournament generated "a significant risk to public health". An analysis of the third and final stage of the research programme, released on Friday, found that more than 85% of all the infections connected to the 49 days of various outdoor sport, music and entertainment events came from the eight Euros games involved, and mainly the semi-final and final.

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/20/9000-covid-cases-linked-to-euro-2020-games-in-mass-events-scheme?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

England's Covid R rate jumps to a high of 1.2

England's coronavirus reproduction number has risen to between 0.9 and 1.2 in the latest Government figures. R represents the average number of people each Covid-19 positive person goes onto infect with the virus. Every 10 people who have coronavirus will infect between 9 and 12 others when the R number is between 0.9 and 1.2. The R value has begun to climb in England as Monday's saw self-isolation rules for double-jabbed Britons relaxed.

https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/covid-r-rate-england-coronavirus-b951633.html?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1629468209-2