

Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

17th Nov 2021

Isolation Tips

Germany Plans Stricter Covid Restrictions for Unvaccinated People

Germany is heading toward stiffer restrictions on people who have refused a Covid-19 vaccine, as authorities across Europe seek to rein in a renewed surge of the disease. Europe's largest economy is grappling with its worst outbreak in the pandemic, posting a fresh record in its contagion rate on Tuesday. The country's response has been complicated by a change in power, with Chancellor Angela Merkel in a caretaker role while negotiations to form a new government proceed. Under pressure to act, lawmakers from the potential ruling coalition are planning to introduce legislation later this week that would impose tougher curbs on people who haven't been inoculated, including requiring tests to go to work and take public transportation.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-11-16/german-covid-deaths-spike-as-lockdown-for-unvaccinated-nears>

Slovakia plans curbs on those unvaccinated for COVID-19 as hospitals fill up

Slovakia's hospitals are in a critical situation dealing with a surge in coronavirus infections and the government will approve measures on Thursday to limit access to services for unvaccinated people, Prime Minister Eduard Heger said. Europe has again become the epicentre of the pandemic, prompting countries like Slovakia and neighbouring Austria to re-introduce restrictions in the run-up to Christmas.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/slovakia-decide-new-covid-19-restrictions-thursday-2021-11-16/>

Japan to ease quarantine for people inoculated with J&J COVID-19 vaccine

Japan intends to ease quarantine rules by the end of November for people inoculated with Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine, the Nikkei daily reported on Tuesday. Japan last week took a first step in its planned phased re-opening of borders, which centres on business travellers. But that plan's easing of quarantine rules for inbound business travellers did not cover people inoculated with J&J's COVID-19 vaccine.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japan-ease-quarantine-people-inoculated-with-jj-covid-19-vaccine-nikkei-2021-11-16/>

Hygiene Helpers

Dutch plan to drop 'corona pass' for unvaccinated faces political push back

The Dutch government's plan to scrap the "corona pass" for people not vaccinated against COVID-19 faced strong opposition in parliament on Tuesday, including from within the ruling coalition. The pass, which grants access to indoor public venues, is now available to people who have been vaccinated, have recovered from COVID-19 or have tested negative for the virus. Under a proposal put forward by caretaker Prime Minister Mark Rutte on Friday, the last option would be dropped. But in an evening debate, even one of Rutte's own four-party coalition government partners expressed concerns that it would cause social division.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/dutch-debate-dropping-corona-pass-indoor-venues-unvaccinated-2021-11-16/>

How food can help recovery from Covid-19

Eating advice for people recovering from Covid-19 is now available online. The Recovery Knowledge Hub, external, launched by the University of Plymouth, asks people about their current diet and

offers tips and ideas to improve it. The hub is aimed at everyone who wants advice, from the public to professionals and it is free, said the university. "Eating the right diet is crucial to keep well physically and mentally, and a key part of recovery from Covid-19 is to make sure your diet is healthy," said Mary Hickson, professor in dietetics at the university.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cpggerprjx5o>

Brazil to offer COVID-19 booster shot to everyone older than 18

Brazilian health minister Marcelo Queiroga said on Tuesday the government will offer COVID-19 booster shots to everyone older than 18. Queiroga said the booster shots will be available five months after the second vaccine dose, and there were enough doses for the entire population.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/brazil-offer-covid-19-booster-shot-everyone-older-than-18-2021-11-16/>

Racial disparities in kids' vaccinations are hard to track

The rollout of COVID-19 shots for elementary-age children has exposed another blind spot in the nation's efforts to address pandemic inequalities: Health systems have released little data on the racial breakdown of youth vaccinations, and community leaders fear that Black and Latino kids are falling behind. Only a handful of states have made public data on COVID-19 vaccinations by race and age, and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does not compile racial breakdowns either. Despite the lack of hard data, public health officials and medical professionals are mindful of disparities and have been reaching out to communities of color to overcome vaccine hesitancy. That includes going into schools, messaging in other languages, deploying mobile vaccine units and emphasizing to skeptical parents that the shots are safe and powerfully effective.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-race-and-ethnicity-pandemics-public-health-health-2c74b6c279d1e5bd505446c6c78176ac5>

Community Activities

Amazon to Pay \$500,000 in California Over Covid Notifications

Amazon has agreed to pay \$500,000 to help enforce California's consumer protection laws after the company was accused of concealing Covid-19 case numbers from its workers, officials said on Monday. The judgment, which is subject to court approval, is the first of its kind nationwide and is in line with a California "right to know" law that was designed to keep workers safe during the pandemic, according to a news release from the attorney general's office. Under the arrangement, Amazon must also tell its warehouse workers within a day about the exact number of new Covid-19 cases in their workplaces, ensure that notifications adequately inform workers of the company's disinfection and safety plans, tell health officials about new cases and submit to monitoring by the attorney general's office regarding its Covid-19 notifications.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/16/us/covid-amazon-settlement.html>

U.K. Missing 465000 People From Workforce Since Covid Hit

Britain continues to face severe labor market shortages despite the end of the furlough program because 465,000 people have disappeared from the workforce since the start of the pandemic, according to Bank of America. Ending the benefit on Sept. 30 for those out of work during lockdowns was expected to bring people who had given up on job hunting back into employment. "That has not happened yet," Bank of America economist Rob Wood said in a note on Tuesday. U.K. payroll numbers jumped by 160,000 to a new high in October, suggesting the economy can absorb many of the 1 million workers who were on furlough when the program closed. Official unemployment for the month of September dropped to 3.9%, lower than immediate pre-pandemic levels.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-11-16/u-k-missing-465-000-people-from-the-workforce-since-covid-hit>

Ireland reimposes early bar, nightclub closures as COVID resurges

Ireland will from Thursday require bars and nightclubs to close early while ramping up the use of booster vaccines in a bid to combat a resurgence in COVID-19 cases in its largely vaccinated population, the governing party said on Tuesday. Three months ago it announced plans to drop almost all restrictions within weeks, but infection numbers have since increased again to levels close to last January's all-time peak, even though more than 90% of adults are now vaccinated.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ireland-reimposes-early-bar-nightclub-closures-covid-resurges-2021-11-16/>

Working Remotely

Return to remote working 'unless absolutely necessary'

In Ireland, people should work from home unless it is absolutely necessary they attend in person, the Taoiseach has said. Announcing a series of measures aimed at slowing the spread of Covid-19, Micheál Martin said the Cabinet has agreed to pause the "phased and cautious return to the workplace". There will be no reintroduction of remote learning for schools and third-level institutions at this point.

<https://www.rte.ie/news/2021/1116/1260256-work-from-home-covid/>

Ericsson Joins List of Work-From-Home Companies for Half of Its Staff Post-Covid

Ericsson, one of the largest employers in Sweden, is redesigning and cutting desk-space in its 400 offices in an attempt to shift half of its workforce to remote working. "It became very clear during the spring of 2020, that we are never going back to the old way of working," Peter Laurin, head of Managed Services at Ericsson, said in an interview. "It should be ok to work from home. Over the long run, we are aiming for a hybrid model, a vision of fifty-fifty between the office and remote working."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-11-16/ericsson-wants-half-of-its-102-000-staff-to-work-from-home>

Virtual Classrooms

New research shows virtual school can harm children's vision

When COVID-19 first shut down classrooms and virtual schooling became the new norm, ophthalmologists predicted an increase in digital eye strain in children. New research from ophthalmologists at Wills Eye Hospital confirms that the increased screen time did lead to more eye strain in children, as well as a more troubling eye condition called convergence insufficiency, which can cause difficulty reading. The study is being presented at AAO 2021, the 125th annual meeting of the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-11-virtual-school-children-vision.html>

5 Reasons Why Online Schools Are Right For Students

Conventional high schools and classrooms don't work for every student. For some students, the high school experience can be underwhelming due to the content covered and the mode of learning. The fear of falling behind the rest and the whole day-long structure can all contribute to malaise with traditional education. However, after COVID, things have changed and you can now enroll in virtual classes that will be better suited to your needs. Here are some reasons why online schools are right for students: flexible schedule, digital assignments, personalized learning, learning at your own pace, and a challenging and engaging environment.

<https://news.elearninginside.com/5-reasons-why-online-schools-are-right-for-students/>

Public Policies

Pfizer Will Allow Its Covid Pill to Be Made and Sold Cheaply in Poor Countries

Pfizer announced a deal on Tuesday to allow its promising Covid-19 treatment to be made and sold inexpensively in 95 poorer nations that are home to more than half of the world's population. The agreement follows a similar arrangement negotiated by Merck last month, and together the deals have the potential to vastly expand global production of two simple antiviral pills that could alter the

course of the pandemic by preventing severe illness from the coronavirus.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/16/health/covid-pill-pfizer.html>

Pfizer Covid Pill: US to Buy Enough for 10 Million Patients

The Biden administration plans to buy enough of Pfizer Inc.'s new Covid-19 pill to treat 10 million patients, people familiar with the matter say. Pfizer's pill to treat the disease caused by the coronavirus showed extraordinary results in a clinical trial, reducing hospitalization and death by 89% among high-risk Covid-19 patients. The company said Tuesday it asked the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for emergency-use authorization for the pill, administered twice a day for five days. The administration has also ordered about 3.1 million courses of a pill from Merck & Co., and has an option in its contract to purchase more than 2 million additional courses.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-11-16/biden-teams-plans-to-buy-10-million-courses-of-pfizer-covid-pill>

Court lottery gives Biden administration a chance to revive COVID vaccine mandate

A judicial panel on Tuesday consolidated 34 lawsuits challenging the Biden administration's workplace COVID-19 vaccine rule in the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, a venue favored by opponents of the rule. President Joe Biden announced plans for the vaccine requirement in September, seeking to stem a surge in COVID-19 cases and get more people back to work. The Cincinnati appeals court was chosen randomly and will take up the challenges to the rule, which compels employers with at least 100 workers to mandate COVID-19 vaccination or weekly testing combined with face masks at work

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/court-lottery-gives-biden-administration-a-chance-to-revive-covid-vaccine-mandate/ar-AAQLhGA>

India opens borders to vaccinated foreign tourists

India opened its borders to fully vaccinated foreign tourists entering the country on commercial flights for the first time in nearly two years on Monday. Tourists entering the country must be fully vaccinated, test negative for the virus within 72 hours of their flight and follow all Covid-19 protocols, according to the health ministry. Travelers from countries that have mutual agreements with India on the recognition of vaccination certificates, including the United States, United Kingdom and multiple European nations, can leave the airport without undergoing a Covid-19 test. However, they must monitor their health for 14 days after their arrival.

<https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/india-tourism-reopening-intl-hnk/index.html>

Moderna says EU to donate over 70 mln doses of its COVID-19 vaccine

Moderna Inc said it signed an agreement that enables European Union and European Economic Area countries to donate over 70 million doses of its COVID-19 vaccine to the COVAX vaccine sharing scheme for low-and-middle income countries.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/moderna-says-eu-donate-over-70-mln-doses-its-covid-19-vaccine-2021-11-16/>

Maintaining Services

NHS boss Amanda Pritchard reveals health service is preparing a yearly Covid booster programme

Amanda Pritchard said the NHS is putting plans in place for yearly booster jabs JCVI recommended booster programme should be extended to all over-40s Ms Pritchard urged people to take up vaccination invitations 'as soon as possible'

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10209241/NHS-prepping-annual-Covid-boosters.html>

More than 10,000 Australians have filed coronavirus vaccine injury claims

Taxpayers are facing a hefty bill for rare but significant coronavirus vaccine injuries, with at least

10,000 people planning to claim under the federal government's no-fault indemnity scheme. Services Australia is building an online portal, to be launched next month, for uncapped claims above \$5000 from those who suffered injury and loss of income due to their COVID-19 vaccine, with compensation for medical costs and lost wages to be paid by the government.

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/more-than-10-000-australians-have-filed-coronavirus-vaccine-injury-claims-20211115-p598yy.html>

Nigeria plans mass vaccination drive, considers booster shot

Nigeria will start a mass COVID-19 vaccination campaign later this week, aiming to inoculate half of its targeted population by the end of January, government officials said. Africa's most-populous country has a goal to vaccinate 111 million people to reach herd immunity. Under the initiative to start on Friday, 55 million doses or more than a million a day will be administered. The country has to date vaccinated only 2.9% of those eligible to get vaccines.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/nigeria-plans-mass-vaccination-drive-considers-booster-shot-2021-11-15/>

Russia to lift COVID-19 ban on flights to Brazil, Argentina, other countries from Dec. 1

Russia will lift its COVID-19 ban on flights to countries including Bangladesh, Brazil, Mongolia, Costa Rica and Argentina from Dec. 1, the government coronavirus task force said on Tuesday. The government stopped normal commercial flights abroad when the pandemic struck last year, but it has since been gradually relaxing the restrictions. The flight bans dealt a heavy blow to Russia's airlines.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/russia-lift-covid-19-ban-flights-brazil-argentina-other-countries-dec-1-2021-11-16/>

Greek health sector workers protest as hospitals struggle with COVID spike

Greek public health sector workers protested in Athens over pay and conditions on Monday as hospitals struggled with a new surge in COVID-19 cases and authorities considered further restrictions. The protesters said they were underpaid, overworked and understaffed. They called for more hirings, for the government to include them on a list of hazardous professions which receive hazard pay benefits, and for private doctors to be ordered to help. A decision by the government to suspend unvaccinated health sector workers has increased staff shortages, they said. Greece made vaccinations mandatory for nursing home staff in July and for healthcare workers in September.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/greek-health-sector-workers-protest-hospitals-struggle-with-covid-spike-2021-11-15/>

Hospitals in Slovak east fill up as COVID wave rages, new law tightens rules

Hospitals in Slovakia, one of Europe's least-vaccinated nations, have been filling up with coronavirus patients, with the northeastern region of Presov reporting almost no spare intensive care beds, authorities and hospitals said on Monday. President Zuzana Caputova has signed a law allowing the government to force unvaccinated people to test twice a week before attending work in the worst-affected regions and keep them out of restaurants and other services. The country of 5.5 million was not planning a national lockdown, however.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/hospitals-slovak-east-fill-up-covid-wave-rages-new-law-tightens-rules-2021-11-15/>

Healthcare Innovations

Pfizer Submits Covid-19 Pill for FDA Authorization

Pfizer Inc. said it asked U.S. health regulators to authorize its oral Covid-19 drug for use in high-risk patients, putting the pill on a path that could make it available for people to take at home by the end of the year. Clearance from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration would give patients and doctors an easy-to-use treatment to keep people out of the hospital early in the course of the disease. "There is an urgent need for lifesaving treatment options," Pfizer Chief Executive Albert

Bourla said Thursday. "We are moving as quickly as possible in our effort to get this potential treatment into the hands of patients."

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/pfizer-asks-fda-to-authorize-covid-19-pill-paxlovid-11637089791>

Why Impact of 'Long Covid' Could Outlast the Pandemic

Millions of people who have gotten Covid-19 and survived are finding that a full recovery can be frustratingly elusive. Weeks or even months after seemingly recovering from even a mild case, many patients still confront a wide range of health problems. As researchers try to measure the duration and depth of what's being called "long Covid," specialized, post-acute Covid clinics are opening to handle the patients. The scale of the pandemic and persistence of some of Covid's disabling effects mean the economic pain and drain on health resources could continue well after the contagion ends.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-04-13/why-impact-of-long-covid-could-outlast-the-pandemic-quicktake>

Three doses of COVID-19 mRNA vaccination safe in high-risk populations

Earlier reports have suggested the high effectiveness of messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA) coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccines at preventing severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infection. However, their efficacy against mild COVID-19 disease appears to wane over time. Thus, the need for additional/booster vaccine doses is being contemplated. This retrospective study included adults within the Mayo Clinic Enterprise who were vaccinated with three doses of United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccines from December 1, 2020, to October 17, 2021. Participants received the first two doses of BNT162b2 or mRNA-1273 according to the emergency use authorization (EUA) protocol. The study participants were administered a third dose of the same vaccine type as the original two doses at least 28 days after the second dose. All subjects were followed up for at least 14 days after their third vaccine dose.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20211115/Three-doses-of-COVID-19-mRNA-vaccination-safe-in-high-risk-populations.aspx>

Researchers find way to filter coronavirus particles out of the air

A study by researchers suggests that air filters can remove almost all airborne traces of COVID-19. The findings by the University of Cambridge and Addenbrooke's Hospital could not only improve the safety of "surge wards" but also opens up the possibility of setting standards for cleaner air to reduce the risk of indoor transmission. With fears growing of another potential wave this winter, the discovery could allow hospitals to better manage their repurposed "surge wards" which can often lack the ability to change the air with a high frequency.

<https://news.sky.com/story/researchers-find-way-to-filter-coronavirus-particles-out-of-the-air-12469882>

COVID-19: Boosters not only replenish immunity against transmission but lift it too, new data shows

These two types of protection - against transmission and against severe disease - are both very important, but they are also quite different. Just because a particular vaccine is good at one thing doesn't necessarily mean it's equally good at the other thing. Just because a particular vaccine's effectiveness at preventing transmission is waning doesn't necessarily mean its effectiveness at preventing serious disease is diminishing at the same rate. I say all of this not just because the two types of protection are often conflated (though they are) but because keeping this distinction under your hat is quite important when navigating all the data around COVID and vaccines.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-boosters-not-only-replenish-immunity-against-transmission-but-lift-it-too-new-data-shows-12469600>