

Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

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Isolation Tips

'COVID is not a cold' - Germany U-turns on ending mandatory isolation

Germany will not end mandatory isolation for most people who catch COVID-19, the health minister said on Wednesday, reversing course after concerns were raised that lifting quarantine restrictions would suggest the pandemic was over. "Coronavirus is not a cold. That is why there must continue to be isolation after an infection," Health Minister Karl Lauterbach said on Twitter, adding he had made a mistake by suggesting an end to mandatory quarantine.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/germany-drops-plan-relax-covid-quarantine-rules-2022-04-06/>

Whole of Shanghai enters COVID lockdown despite lower symptomatic cases

Chinese authorities on Tuesday extended a lockdown in Shanghai to cover all of the financial centre's 26 million people, despite growing anger over quarantine rules in the city, where latest results show only 268 symptomatic daily COVID-19 cases. In a major test of China's zero-tolerance strategy to eliminate the novel coronavirus, the government widened the lockdown to eastern parts of the city and extended until further notice restrictions in western districts, which had been due to expire on Tuesday. The broader lockdown came after testing saw asymptomatic COVID-19 cases surge to more than 13,000. Symptomatic cases fell on Monday to 268, from 425 the previous day

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-lockdown-deepens-after-new-surge-asymptomatic-cases-2022-04-05/>

Hygiene Helpers

Irish people aged 65 and over to receive fourth dose of Covid-19 vaccine

Irish people aged 65 and over should receive a fourth dose of a Covid-19 vaccine, the Republic of Ireland's National Immunisation Advisory Committee has said. Health Minister Stephen Donnelly has accepted the recommendation. Those aged 12 and older, who are immunocompromised, will also receive another booster.

<https://www.irishnews.com/news/republicofirelandnews/2022/04/06/news/irish-people-aged-65-and-over-to-receive-fourth-dose-of-covid-19-vaccine-2635445/>

Ontarians 60+ to be eligible for 4th COVID-19 vaccine doses starting Thursday

Ontario is opening up eligibility for fourth COVID-19 vaccine doses to those aged 60 and older as wastewater data suggests the number of infections are almost as high as in early January, when Omicron was at its peak. Ontarians 60 and up, as well as all Indigenous residents and their non-Indigenous household members aged 18 or older, will be able to book their second booster shot through the province's online portal starting Thursday at 8 a.m, the province said.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/covid-ontario-april-6-2022-1.6409884>

More Australians are reporting catching COVID-19 twice, but there's limited data on reinfections

A growing number of Australians are catching COVID-19 for a second time as the country grapples with another surge in infections, but a lack of official data makes it hard to pinpoint exactly who is getting it twice. Raelene Roede is a 50-year-old kindergarten teacher from Geelong, south-west of Melbourne, who caught COVID-19 for the first time after New Year's Eve in January. After an extended bout of isolation - made longer due to January's infamous testing delays - and a week

spent feeling pretty sick, Ms Roede made a full recovery and returned to her daily gym routine.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-04-06/covid-19-reinfections-increasing-in-australia/100967706>

Spain to mostly ditch indoor mask wearing from April 20

Spain will lift a requirement to wear face masks indoors except on public transport and in hospitals and retirement homes from April 20, Health Minister Carolina Darias said on Wednesday. Since the Omicron variant of the coronavirus drove up infections to record highs in January the caseload has receded sharply and COVID patients now account for just 3.5% of hospital occupation. She said advisers have recommended lifting the obligation after the Easter long weekend.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/spain-mostly-ditch-indoor-mask-wearing-april-20-2022-04-06/>

Quebec extends mask mandate as new COVID wave spreads in Canada

Quebec will require masks to be worn in indoor public spaces for all of April, delaying a plan to relax the measure by the middle of the month as it and other Canadian provinces face a new COVID-19 wave, a top public health official said on Tuesday. The province, the second most populous in Canada, will become one of the last parts of North America to continue a mask mandate in public indoor places like stores, with health officials projecting a rise in cases and hospitalizations. "We do not expect the mask will be needed after the month of April," Dr. Luc Boileau, the province's interim public health director, told reporters.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/quebec-extends-mask-mandate-end-april-covid-hospitalizations-rise-2022-04-05/>

China's COVID outbreak will improve if existing policies implemented better - expert

"The duration of this epidemic depends on our prevention and control strategies, and how strong we implement our prevention and control measures," said Wu Zunyou, chief epidemiologist at the China Center for Disease Control and Prevention. China's "zero-COVID" stance, known as "dynamic clearance", has come under growing scrutiny in recent weeks after the lockdown of the country's most populous city of Shanghai amid an outbreak of the highly contagious Omicron variant.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-covid-outbreak-will-improve-if-existing-policies-implemented-better-2022-04-06/>

Global groups propose strategy to tackle ongoing COVID risks

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and three global health partners today proposed a strategy to manage future risk from COVID, factoring in different scenarios on how the pandemic could evolve and setting ambitious price tags that would enable key policies to take shape.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/04/global-groups-propose-strategy-tackle-ongoing-covid-risks>

Community Activities

Covid-19 Hits Broadway Once More, Leading to Cancellations, Changes

Covid is hitting Broadway again. Several highly anticipated shows have been affected by breakthrough cases of Covid-19, as Broadway looks to make up for pandemic losses with big names and longtime favorites lighting up the Great White Way. "Macbeth," starring Daniel Craig and Ruth Negga and directed by Sam Gold, said Tuesday it was canceling shows through Saturday at 8 p.m. ET because of "a limited number of positive COVID test results within the company." Mr. Craig, who is returning to the stage for the first time in six years, tested positive for Covid-19 last week.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-hits-broadway-once-more-leading-to-cancellations-changes-11649260998>

Shanghai says it will make some exceptions in COVID children separation policy

Guardians of children with special needs who are infected with COVID can apply to escort them, a Shanghai city official said on Wednesday, pointing to a relaxation of a child-separation policy that has triggered widespread public anger. The city has been separating COVID-positive children from their parents, citing epidemic prevention measures. China's elimination strategy against COVID sees

it test, trace and centrally quarantine all cases. In the face of rising public criticism, the government said on Monday it would allow children to be accompanied by their parents if the parents were also infected, but that they would still separate them if they were not.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/shanghai-start-another-round-city-wide-covid-tests-2022-04-06/>

China's services sector activity hit hard by Omicron surge - Caixin PMI

Activity in China's services sector contracted at the sharpest pace in two years in March as a surge in coronavirus cases restricted mobility and weighed on demand, a private sector survey showed on Wednesday. The Caixin services Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) dived to 42.0 in March from 50.2 in February, dropping below the 50-point mark that separates growth from contraction on a monthly basis. The reading indicates the sharpest activity decline since the initial onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in February 2020. The survey, which focuses more on small firms in coastal regions, tallied with an official survey, which also showed deterioration in the services sector

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-services-sector-activity-squeezed-by-omicron-surge-caixin-pmi-2022-04-06/>

Working Remotely

Young Canadians hoping to move up find hybrid work model challenging

Like many companies, Fuse has embraced a hybrid model of working remotely and in the office, which means junior employees looking to reap those in-person benefits have new challenges to navigate. Early-career employees have typically had the benefit of an in-person work environment as they look to develop their skills, understand workplace norms and progress professionally. To make the most of their time in office, junior employees should make sure to ask their colleagues and managers lots of questions around how things work and what success looks like

<https://globalnews.ca/news/8739584/young-workers-canada-hybrid-work-model/>

9 things to consider if you want to work remotely all the time

The dramatic changes brought to our working world by the Covid-19 crisis led to an overnight increase in remote working. However as we transition into a new era of work, rather than returning to nine-to-five office-based work, remote work is looking likely to become far more common. Has the pandemic provided you with your first experience of working from home for an extended period of time and you're finding you're enjoying it? How can you determine whether a permanently remote role really is right for you? There are a few questions to ask yourself before you start the job search process

<https://www.siliconrepublic.com/advice/work-remotely-things-to-consider>

Virtual Classrooms

US and UK pupils want remote working options in higher education and employment

Remote learning may have been a temporary education measure during the pandemic, but for many students it has had a permanent impact - affecting their readiness for post-secondary education and career plans, future workplace outlooks, and choice of where to live. The majority (58%) of students surveyed said they envision a combination of remote and in-person work for their future careers, with nearly one in five stating that the ability to work remotely is a factor in their decision about what to study or what jobs they might pursue.

<https://ie-today.co.uk/headlines/pupils-want-remote-working-options/>

Did we really learn anything about schools in the pandemic?

If you Google "lessons learned about schools during the pandemic" you will see a long list of articles that purport to tell us about all the things we learned about teaching and learning in the two years since the coronavirus crisis began in March 2020. Many of the pieces highlight similar "lessons" —

on inequity, technology, in-school learning, funding mechanisms and other issues — that seemingly hadn't been thought of before. But for anybody paying the slightest bit of attention there is nothing on the list of pandemic school “lessons” that we didn't already know before covid-19 — and for a long, long time.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/04/06/did-we-learn-anything-schools-pandemic/>

Public Policies

FDA suspends use of GSK-Vir's sotrovimab for Covid-19 treatment in US

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has updated the emergency use authorization (EUA) for GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) and Vir Biotechnology's sotrovimab and suspended its use to treat Covid-19. Sotrovimab is an investigational monoclonal antibody that binds to the epitope of the SARS-CoV-2 virus to neutralise it. The regulatory authority noted that the antibody is unlikely to be effective against the Omicron BA.2 sub-variant, which is causing a rise in the number of Covid-19 cases in the region. The proportion of the sub-variant-caused Covid-19 cases is more than 50% in all Health and Human Services (HHS) US regions, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Nowcast data showed.

<https://www.pharmaceutical-technology.com/news/fda-gsk-sotrovimab-covid/>

Covid-19: WHO suspends supplies of India's Covaxin through UN agencies

The World Health Organization has suspended the supply of Covaxin through UN procurement agencies because of manufacturing irregularities. Covaxin is India's indigenous covid-19 vaccine, produced by the Hyderabad based Bharat Biotech. A spokesperson for WHO told The BMJ that the suspension had come after a broader inspection of a few companies in India by the agency. “In the case of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin manufacturing site, problems were detected in some parts of the manufacturing process, and changes were made after the emergency use listing was granted,” said the spokesperson. “But [these] were not submitted to the national drug regulator and WHO for evaluation and validation. However, the company is fully aware and cooperative.” The move came a day after Bharat Biotech announced that it would be scaling down its production of Covaxin domestically, as demand was dropping and infections were reducing alongside wider immunisation coverage in India. Covaxin received emergency use authorisation from India's Central Drugs Standard Control Organization in January 2021 and was included in the nationwide immunisation drive.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/377/bmj.o902>

Canada panel makes initial recommendations on second COVID booster shot

An official Canadian panel has provided initial recommendations on the use of a second COVID-19 vaccine booster dose for some Canadians as infections rise in many parts of the country, Health Canada said on Tuesday. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommended Canadian jurisdictions to prepare for the deployment of a second vaccine booster dose program over the coming weeks prioritizing people 80 years old and over and residents of long-term care.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/canada-panel-makes-initial-recommendations-second-covid-booster-shot-2022-04-05/>

U.S. Fed bars six former bankers over COVID grant fraud

The U.S. Federal Reserve on Tuesday said it had barred six former bank executives from Regions Bank and Bank of America Merrill Lynch from the industry for fraudulently obtaining COVID-19 pandemic relief grants. Under the CARES Act, some small businesses were eligible to receive funds to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. The six individuals obtained funds based on fraudulent representations and used the money for unauthorized personal expenses, the Fed said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-fed-bars-six-former-bankers-over-covid-grant-fraud-2022-04-05/>

COVAX, African Union decline to buy more doses of Moderna's COVID shots

COVAX, the global project to share COVID-19 vaccines, and the African Union have declined options to buy additional doses of Moderna's shot, as developing nations struggle to allocate supplies. The global alliance did not exercise the option for 166 million doses of the shot for the third quarter of 2022, as well for 166 million doses in the fourth quarter, which expired on April 1, a Moderna spokesperson said.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/covax-african-union-decline-buy-more-doses-modernas-covid-shots-2022-04-05/>

Biden launches U.S. plan to help Americans struggling with long COVID

President Joe Biden has tasked the U.S. health department with developing a national action plan to tackle the looming health crisis of long COVID, a complex, multi-symptom condition that leaves many of its sufferers unable to work. Long COVID, which arises months after a COVID-19 infection, affects nearly 7% of all U.S. adults and 2.3% of the overall population and has cost an estimated \$386 billion in lost wages, savings and medical bills, according to an analysis by the Solve Long Covid Initiative, a non-profit research and advocacy group

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/white-house-launches-national-plan-address-long-covid-2022-04-05/>

FDA pulls authorization for GSK-Vir's COVID therapy as BA.2 cases rise

The U.S. health regulator said on Tuesday GlaxoSmithKline and Vir Biotechnology's antibody therapy was no longer authorized as a COVID-19 treatment, with data suggesting it was unlikely to be effective against the dominant Omicron sub-variant in the country. The move by the agency, which had already pulled its authorization for the sotrovimab therapy in much of the U.S. northeast last month, sent shares in Vir Biotechnology 11.5% lower. The highly contagious BA.2 coronavirus sub-variant is estimated to make up about three of every four COVID-19 cases in the United States, according to the latest government data

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/fda-says-gsk-virs-sotrovimab-no-longer-authorized-treat-covid-us-2022-04-05/>

Japan to lift COVID entry ban for 106 countries including U.S.

Japan plans to ease COVID 19-related border restrictions by lifting its entry ban for foreign nationals from 106 countries including the United States, Britain and France on Friday, the government said. Tokyo has been gradually relaxing pandemic-induced curbs but the loosened border regime does not mean a full reopening to tourists.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japan-lift-covid-19-entry-ban-106-countries-including-us-2022-04-06/>

China relies on traditional medicine to fight COVID surge in Shanghai

Shanghai is distributing to residents millions of boxes of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), such as herbal products and flu capsules, which it says can treat COVID-19 in the battle to control its largest virus outbreak. China's commercial capital, now under an extended lockdown, reported more than 17,000 new COVID-19 infections on April 5, including 311 symptomatic cases, among a population of more than 26 million. "Facing the extremely transmissible Omicron variant, we should use TCM treatment as soon as possible," said Fang Min, president of the city's Shuguang Hospital.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-relies-traditional-medicine-fight-covid-surge-shanghai-2022-04-06/>

Maintaining Services

Sanctioned Oil Piling Up Off China as Virus Outbreak Worsens

Tankers carrying 22 million barrels of Russian, Iranian and Venezuelan oil are piling up off China, according to Kpler, as the country battles a virus outbreak that's sapping demand and causing logistics problems. China has been one of the only buyers of sanctioned Iranian and Venezuelan oil over the last few years. The world's largest crude importer is also still taking Russian supplies that

are being largely shunned since the invasion of Ukraine. The trade in the discounted oil is now being disrupted by the country's worsening virus outbreak, with waiting times to unload ships increasing.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-06/sanctioned-oil-piling-up-off-china-as-virus-outbreak-worsens>

China's widening COVID curbs exact mounting economic toll

China's top European business group warned on Wednesday that its "zero-COVID" strategy was harming the attractiveness of Shanghai as a financial hub, echoing analysts voicing caution over the mounting economic toll of the country's coronavirus curbs. China has for the past month been tackling multiple outbreaks with an elimination strategy that seeks to test, trace and centrally quarantine all positive COVID-19 cases. Nomura estimated on Tuesday that a total of 23 Chinese cities have implemented either full or partial lockdowns, which collectively are home to an estimated 193 million people and contribute to 22% of China's GDP. The European Union Chamber of Commerce in China said that the strategy was causing growing difficulties transporting goods across provinces and through ports, harming factory output.

<https://www.msn.com/en-ca/finance/other/chinas-widening-covid-curbs-exact-mounting-economic-toll/ar-AAVh7v>

Worries of more school disruptions are rising alongside COVID-19 cases

As the spring weather improves, Montrealer Doug Bentley understands people feeling a pent-up desire to return to pre-pandemic normalcy. Still, as a parent with two kids attending elementary school, he remains "ill at ease" about classrooms amid COVID-19. "I don't feel particularly comfortable about the situation in the schools," he said. "There's a lot of denial going on about the sixth wave that has started." With capacity limits, mask mandates and other restrictions lingering in some areas but gone in others, Canadian regions remain in varying stages of easing pandemic mitigation measures. Yet as health experts warn again of rising new COVID-19 infection and hospitalization rates in parts of the country, parents and school officials are bracing for what a sixth wave may bring to classrooms.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/covid-sixth-wave-school-concerns-1.6408695>

Healthcare Innovations

Rare vaccine-related blood clots tied to gene; concentrated antibodies may help the immunosuppressed

The following is a summary of some recent studies on COVID-19. They include research that warrants further study to corroborate the findings and that has yet to be certified by peer review. Vaccine-related blood clots tied to gene, antibody variants. New research may help shed light on a rare but serious blood-clotting problem associated with the COVID-19 vaccines from AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson . Five unrelated people with this clotting complication, known as vaccine-induced thrombotic thrombocytopenia, all had unusually-structured antibodies against a protein called PF4 that is involved in blood clotting, the researchers found.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/rare-vaccine-related-blood-clots-tied-gene-concentrated-antibodies-may-help-2022-04-06/>

Protection against infection offered by fourth Covid-19 vaccine dose wanes quickly, Israeli study finds

A fourth dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine seems to offer short-lived protection against infection overall, but protection against severe illness did not wane for at least several weeks, according to a new study. The study, published Tuesday in the New England Journal of Medicine, looked at the health records of more than 1.25 million vaccinated people in Israel who were 60 or older from January through March 2022, a time when the Omicron coronavirus variant was the dominant strain.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/05/health/israel-fourth-dose-study/index.html>

Current COVID vaccines not 'well-matched' against BA.2 -FDA

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration said it is aiming to come up with a decision on coronavirus strain selection for the composition of future COVID-19 boosters by June, as a panel of its advisers met on Wednesday to discuss the issue. "We should be thinking of a May to June time frame here," said Peter Marks, director of FDA's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research, during the meeting, adding that there is some wiggle room. The panel of outside experts was convened to discuss how and whether to use additional vaccine boosters after data from Israel showed a fourth dose lowered rates of severe COVID among older people.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-fda-says-current-covid-vaccines-not-well-matched-against-ba2-variant-2022-04-06/>

UK Covid Cases Hit Peak on BA.2 Omicron, Waning Immunity: Study

Covid-19 infections in England reached their highest level in March since the pandemic began, driven by the omicron subvariant BA.2 and waning immunity among older adults, according to a new study. The overall Covid prevalence rate more than doubled last month from February when infection rates were falling from the omicron-led January peak, the React-1 study led by Imperial College London found. Since then the emergence of BA.2 -- a more-transmissible version of omicron-- has accelerated new infections and become the dominant strain in England, accounting for about 90% of the samples that tested positive. The higher infection rates may result in an increase in hospitalizations despite the higher levels of vaccination among the population, said Paul Elliott, director of the React program, and chair in Epidemiology and Public Health Medicine, Imperial College London.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-05/u-k-covid-cases-at-highest-level-as-immunity-wanes-study-finds>

COVID vaccine in early pregnancy not tied to birth defects

Maternal COVID-19 vaccination in early pregnancy is not associated with fetal abnormalities detectable on ultrasound, finds a study yesterday in JAMA Pediatrics. The retrospective study, conducted by Northwestern University and Penn State College of Medicine researchers, used electronic medical records to identify any link between COVID-19 vaccination in early pregnancy and the risk of major fetal structural abnormalities on ultrasound. Major structural fetal abnormalities were defined as those identifiable on ultrasound in the second semester (18 to 24 weeks' gestation) that may affect the newborn's life expectancy, health, or functioning. Examples included malformation of the heart or spine. Functional defects were excluded from the study because they can't be assessed using ultrasound, the researchers said. "If the baby's heart isn't forming correctly, that could lead to the baby needing major cardiac surgery or long-term medication," senior author Emily Miller, MD, MPH, said in a Northwestern University news release.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/04/covid-vaccine-early-pregnancy-not-tied-birth-defects>