

Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

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Isolation Tips

Shanghai seeks to reassure residents over COVID-hit supplies

Shanghai reported nearly 25,000 locally transmitted COVID-19 infections on Sunday and sought to assure locked-down residents of China's most populous city that supply bottlenecks affecting availability of food and other items would ease. Streets remained largely silent in the city of 26 million people as curbs under its "zero tolerance" policy allow only healthcare workers, volunteers, delivery personnel or those with special permission to move freely.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-covid-cases-keep-rising-food-supply-problems-persist-2022-04-10/>

Hygiene Helpers

Second Covid Booster Vaccines: Are Fourth Shots Effective?

Everyone agrees that more coronavirus variants are likely. But how much the virus will evolve and how long existing vaccines will continue protecting against severe cases of Covid-19 remains uncertain. That's led a short list of countries to recommend second boosters of existing vaccines for the especially vulnerable. These doses -- often referred to as a fourth shot, though it will be the third for those who initially got the single-dose immunization made by Johnson & Johnson -- are essentially a stopgap measure. Longer term, many researchers believe the vaccines will need to be periodically updated to counteract new strains, just as flu shots are tweaked annually.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-08/are-second-boosters-effective-what-s-known-so-far-quicktake>

Airlines that dropped mask requirements are now suffering staff shortages due to COVID-19

Overseas airlines are having to cancel hundreds of flights as they grapple with coronavirus-related staffing shortages weeks after they ditched rules requiring passengers and staff to mask up in the air. The disruptions also come as the CEOs of leading U.S. airlines urge the Biden administration to roll back a federal rule requiring that masks be worn in the sky. Masks have not been required on flights operated by budget-friendly, Swiss airline EasyJet since March 27, the airline said in a statement. The move came after the UK removed all travel restrictions earlier in March.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/flights-canceled-covid-mask-rules-dropped-airlines/>

India to widen COVID booster effort to all adults from Sunday

India will offer booster doses of COVID-19 vaccine to all adults from Sunday, although free third doses will be limited to frontline workers and those older than 60 who get them at government centres. The country has given 1.85 billion vaccine doses among its population of 1.35 billion. Of these, 82% are the AstraZeneca dose made domestically and called Covishield. Those older than 18 who received a second dose nine months ago will be eligible for the "precaution" dose, the health ministry said, using the government's term for boosters.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/all-indian-adults-be-eligible-booster-covid-vaccine-doses-april-10-2022-04-08/>

Omicron spawns U.S. search for better kids' masks, new standard

The fast-spreading Omicron variant stoked U.S. interest in better masks for children to ward off COVID-19, and that is adding fuel to an effort that could set the stage for domestic oversight of their quality.

<https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/omicron-spawns-us-search-better-kids-masks-new-standard-2022-04-08/>

Covid-19: Ending free testing is a mistake

In light of escalating rates of infection, hospital admissions, and rising sickness absence rates, the UK government should reconsider the end to free covid-19 testing. Helpfully, in the UK, we now have nine more “official” symptoms to consider when deciding if we might have covid-19. What we do not have is universally free testing so many people are left to make up their own minds about whether they have a cold, hay fever, normal aches and pains, or indeed covid-19. If they can afford to, and can find stocks, they can buy a lateral flow test. On the day that free testing finished, we saw one of the highest infection rates of the pandemic so far, with one in 13 of us infected with covid-19.¹ We have now got the highest number of people with covid-19 being admitted to hospital, each week, since the pandemic began, and covid-19-related deaths reaching a level not seen for a while. The UK government’s strategy for “Living with covid-19” clearly means potentially living with chaos. This chaos is typified by the woeful communications that surround the government’s decisions. How will this new state of being affect the public, NHS staff, and those who are clinically extremely vulnerable—and what should be done about it?

<https://www.bmj.com/content/377/bmj.o936>

Community Activities

Shanghai jumps into group buying to stay fed during COVID lockdown

When Shanghai first went into full COVID-19 lockdown last week, Ping Mai wasn't expecting she'd become her housing compound's unofficial broker for its meat supply. With her and her neighbours stuck at home and struggling to buy food amid lockdown curbs that have shuttered stores and dramatically reduced the number of couriers, she is among millions that are trying to figure out how to buy fresh supplies on a daily basis. One popular solution has been community group-buying, which sees residents at the same address band together to bulk buy groceries or meals from suppliers or restaurants, placing single orders that could add up to thousands of dollars.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-jumps-into-group-buying-stay-fed-during-covid-lockdown-2022-04-08/>

Women in healthcare and life sciences: The ongoing stress of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a seismic shift in the workforce, with a specific impact on women. Millions of Americans have resigned from their jobs, and many have cited unmanageable workloads or a need to care for family as important factors in their decision. The healthcare sector is no exception. Our most recent analysis is based on the seventh annual Women in the Workplace data (for 2021), by McKinsey and LeanIn.Org. That research looks at drop-offs in female representation, promotion rates, and external hiring at the highest levels in healthcare; at the barriers to advancement for women of color and at threats to recent gains. In many cases, these outcomes are correlated with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, including reports of increased responsibilities at home and higher levels of burnout.

<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/healthcare-systems-and-services/our-insights/women-in-healthcare-and-life-sciences-the-ongoing-stress-of-covid-19>

Can US tenants cope with COVID eviction protections ending?

Housing rights campaigner Rob Robinson and Legal Aid’s Beth Mellen on the housing crisis in the United States. “Once the courts open up, we will see a rush to evict,” says housing rights campaigner Rob Robinson. America’s federal moratorium on evictions ended in August last year and, with COVID housing protections almost all gone, the expected wave of evictions will likely worsen the country’s homelessness crisis. Robinson himself was unhoused for two years and eventually “found his way out”. But he warns against the narrative that unhoused people should be able to “pull themselves up by their bootstraps”.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/program/upfront/2022/4/8/can-us-tenants-cope-with-covid-eviction-protections-ending>

UK airport warns COVID-related delays could last months

A major British airport warned passengers on Friday to expect the delays plaguing travel to continue for months, as the U.K. aviation regulator told the country's air industry to shape up after weeks of canceled flights and long airport queues. The head of Manchester Airport in northwest England said passengers could face waits of up to 90 minutes to get through security "over the next few months." Travelers in Britain have suffered days of delays during the current Easter school holiday break, with British Airways and easyJet canceling hundreds of flights because of coronavirus-related staff absences, and long lines building at airport check-in, security and baggage points.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-business-health-travel-europe-b8a76bd2f4b1a1ae9e20cdcc682e4765>

'Get used to it': Outbreaks give taste of living with virus

The U.S. is getting a first glimpse of what it's like to experience COVID-19 outbreaks during this new phase of living with the virus, and the roster of the newly infected is studded with stars. Cabinet members, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Broadway actors and the governors of New Jersey and Connecticut have all tested positive. Outbreaks at Georgetown University and Johns Hopkins University are bringing back mask requirements to those campuses as officials seek out quarantine space. The known infections likely reveal only the tip of the iceberg — with actors and politicians regularly tested at work. Official case figures are certain to be vast undercounts of how widely the virus is circulating because of home testing and mildly sick not bothering to test at all.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-living-with-virus-outbreaks-26ce89a748b27b3a47730d29a947237a>

Working Remotely

Return-to-office mandates will soon be 'very outdated,' says Atlassian's head of distributed work

Companies that adopted permanent remote-work policies during the pandemic are doubling down on their commitments to flexibility while major companies like Google and Twitter call employees back to offices this month. But it's only a matter of time before in-person requirements become passé, says Annie Dean, who leads distributed workforce strategy at Atlassian, an Australia-based software company. "This conversation will seem very outdated as the next generation of leaders rises in the workplace," she tells CNBC Make It, adding that "in the future, work is not a place. It can happen anywhere."

<https://www.cnbc.com/2022/04/08/return-to-office-mandates-will-soon-be-very-outdated-atlassians-head-of-distributed-work.html>

59% say remote working has afforded them a higher salary

Almost three-fifths (59%) of remote workers said the practice has afforded them a higher salary, according to research by global compliance and payroll technology organisation Deel. Its survey of more than 700 individuals working remotely in 86 countries also found that just under two-thirds (64%) found it had helped them to increase their savings, thanks for factors such as salary increases, as well as reduced travel and housing costs. In addition, three-quarters of respondents said working remotely had afforded them a better work-life balance, while 51% said it had resulted in increased productivity and 35% said it had helped them to obtain their dream job.

<https://employeebenefits.co.uk/59-remote-working-afforded-higher-salary/>

Virtual Classrooms

How Can Immersive Learning Be Used in Hybrid Classrooms?

As the pandemic affected higher education and forced universities to think creatively about keeping students engaged from afar, immersive learning continued to gain traction as a virtual tool to bring previously inaccessible concepts, locations and objects directly to students using technology. It's important to know what it is, the technology needed to use it, and its potential to impact remote and hybrid education models.

<https://edtechmagazine.com/higher/article/2022/04/how-can-immersive-learning-be-used-hybrid-classrooms-perfcon>

WHO: Two-thirds of people in Africa may have had COVID

More than two-thirds of people living in Africa may have contracted COVID-19 over the past two years, about 97 times more than the number of reported infections, a World Health Organization (WHO) report has suggested. Laboratory tests have detected 11.5 million COVID-19 cases and 252,000 fatalities across the African continent. But according to the report released on Thursday, some 800 million people could have already been infected by last September. Officials at the WHO's Africa region said the study – which is still being peer-reviewed – suggests the officially confirmed numbers were “likely only scratching the surface of the real extent of coronavirus infections in Africa”. “A new meta-analysis of standardised sero-prevalence study revealed that the true number of infections could be as much as 97 times higher than the number of confirmed reported cases,” said WHO Africa boss Matshidiso Moeti.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/8/two-thirds-of-africans-may-have-had-covid-who-study>

Vaccine group Gavi secures \$4.8 billion in funding pledges for COVAX

The global vaccine alliance Gavi has secured \$4.8 billion in funding pledges for the vaccine-sharing scheme COVAX, an official said on Friday, falling just shy of its target. “It is really putting us in a very comfortable position,” Marie-Ange Saraka-Yao, managing director for resource mobilization at Gavi, told a virtual media briefing. The group had previously said it needed an additional \$5.2 billion to continue delivering COVID-19 vaccines at scale as part of its global programme that delivers shots to poorer countries

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/vaccine-group-gavi-secures-48-bln-funding-pledges-covax-2022-04-08/>

Pfizer Covid-19 booster shots approved for children aged 12-15 by Therapeutic Goods Administration

Australia's medical regulator has given approval for 12 to 15-year-olds to receive a COVID-19 booster. The Therapeutic Goods Administration gave provisional approval for people in the Year 7 to 10 age range to receive the Pfizer booster. A final green light will need to be given by the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation before the boosters can be rolled out to them. The medical regulator has recommended the booster be given six months after the primary course of a COVID-19 vaccine.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10698885/Pfizer-Covid-19-booster-shots-approved-children-aged-12-15-Therapeutic-Goods-Administration.html>

ECDC and EMA Issue Advice on Fourth Doses of mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines

ECDC and EMA have concluded that it is too early to consider using a fourth dose of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines in the general population. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European Medicine Agency's (EMA's) COVID-19 task force (ETC) have concluded that it is too early to consider using a fourth dose of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines in the general population. The vaccines being referred to are Pfizer's Comirnaty and Moderna's Spikevax. ECDC and EMA concluded that there is currently no clear evidence in the European Union that adults with normal immune systems will benefit from a fourth dose. However, in adults aged 80 years and older, the agencies agreed that a fourth dose may be administered for the protection against COVID-19. There may be a reevaluation of recommending a fourth dose for adults aged 60 to 79 years depending on the epidemiological situation changes and new data. As of now, there is no clear evidence that the current three-dose vaccination system is decreasing in effectiveness for this age group.

<https://www.biopharminternational.com/view/ecdc-and-ema-issue-advice-on-fourth-doses-of-mrna-covid-19-vaccines>

The leaked WTO COVID patent waiver text promises a very bad deal

In October 2020, South Africa and India's governments tabled a bold proposal (PDF) at the World

Trade Organization (WTO) to temporarily waive intellectual property (IP) protections for producing COVID-19 vaccines and other coronavirus-related medical tools for the duration of the pandemic. The proposal aimed to address an urgent problem: multinational pharmaceutical companies and their backers using their monopoly power to prevent vaccine and medical product manufacturers across the world from scaling up production to meet global needs. It has been more than a year since the proposal was tabled, and the ongoing disparities in access to timely supplies of vaccines and other key technologies show the need for a waiver agreement is still as urgent as ever.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2022/4/8/the-leaked-wto-covid-patent-waiver-text-promises-a-very-bad-deal>

Maintaining Services

China's Covid Lockdowns Hit Supplies to Companies Like Apple and Tesla

Manufacturers are struggling to keep some of their China operations going as extended and widening Covid-19 lockdowns choke off supplies and clog up truck routes and ports, heaping more pressure on the stretched global supply chain. Stringent government measures to contain the country's Covid-19 outbreak, the worst in more than two years, are locking down tens of millions of people, mostly in and around the industrial heartland of Shanghai. The curbs are keeping many workers at home, restricting output at some factories and closing others, including component makers for Apple Inc. and Tesla Inc. Tesla, which suspended work at its factory in Shanghai on March 28, still hasn't set a date for restarting production, according to people familiar with the matter. The electric-vehicle giant said it is implementing Covid-19 control requirements and setting work arrangements according to government policies.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/manufacturers-grind-to-a-halt-in-china-as-lockdowns-expand-11649343420>

Covid Could Be Surging in the U.S. Right Now and We Might Not Even Know It

The rise of Covid cases in some regions of the U.S., just as testing efforts wane, has raised the specter that the next major wave of the virus may be difficult to detect. In fact, the country could be in the midst of a surge right now and we might not even know it. Testing and viral sequencing are critical to responding quickly to new outbreaks of Covid. And yet, as the country tries to move on from the pandemic, demand for lab-based testing has declined and federal funding priorities have shifted. The change has forced some testing centers to shutter while others have hiked up prices in response to the end of government-subsidized testing programs. People are increasingly relying on at-home rapid tests if they decide to test at all. But those results are rarely reported, giving public health officials little insight into how widespread the virus truly is.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-10/covid-19-could-be-spreading-undetected-in-u-s?srnd=premium-europe>

COVID: Vulnerable coronavirus patients getting at-home treatment which improves symptoms 'within hours'

More than 32,000 vulnerable COVID patients in England have been treated with "cutting-edge" antiviral drugs which improve symptoms "within hours", the NHS has said. The health service has procured nearly five million doses of Pfizer's Paxlovid and other antivirals, such as Molnupiravir, via a deal struck by the government. Paxlovid was found in trials to cut coronavirus hospital admissions and deaths by 88% and has been given to more than 6,000 patients already - 1,400 in the last seven days alone. Molnupiravir, which clinical trials suggest reduces the risk of hospital admission or death by 30%, was approved in November 2021 and has been used as an at-home treatment since December.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-vulnerable-coronavirus-patients-getting-at-home-treatment-which-improves-symptoms-within-hours-12585804>

Saudi Arabia expands Haj to 1 mln pilgrims, easing COVID curbs

Saudi Arabia will let up to 1 million people join the Haj pilgrimage this year, greatly expanding the

key event to participants from outside the kingdom after two years of tight COVID restrictions, state media said on Saturday. Pilgrims to Mecca this year must be under age 65 and fully vaccinated against the coronavirus, the ministry of Hajj and Umrah said in a statement carried by the SPA news agency. Participants from abroad will be allowed this year but must present a recent negative COVID PCR test, and health precautions will be observed, it said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-raises-number-haj-pilgrims-allowed-one-mln-this-year-spa-2022-04-09/>

Healthcare Innovations

Study finds U.S. COVID-19 vaccinations averted 2.2 million deaths

A new study published Friday found COVID-19 vaccinations have prevented 2.2 million deaths in the United States. The Commonwealth Fund study said 17 million hospitalizations were averted by the vaccines between December 12, 2020, and March 31, 2022. More than \$899 billion was saved in healthcare costs due to the vaccines, according to the Commonwealth Fund study. The study found there would have been 66 million more COVID-19 infections without the vaccinations.

https://www.upi.com/Health_News/2022/04/08/COVID19-commonwealth-fund-study-vaccines-prevented-millions-of-deaths/1421649425164/

In Early Testing, Nasal Spray Shows Signs It Can Fight COVID-19

Over two years into the pandemic, researchers are still searching for new and better ways to help people avoid COVID-19. While COVID-19 vaccines and boosters have been helpful at protecting people from severe hospitalization and death, they have been less effective at preventing symptomatic cases of the disease. Now researchers are looking at novel ways to keep COVID-19 from infecting human cells. Researchers Trusted Source at Cornell University have been testing a nasal spray that blocks COVID-19 infection. Their study discovered a small molecule that, if sprayed into the nose, may help prevent COVID-19 from infecting cells. The study is still in its early stages and is currently only being tested in mice. But experts are hopeful that this type of study may help lead to better protection against the virus.

<https://www.healthline.com/health-news/in-early-testing-nasal-spray-shows-signs-it-can-fight-covid-19>

COVID-19: Damage to heart's pacemaker cells may explain arrhythmia

A new study Trusted Source exploring the link between SARS-CoV-2 infection and irregularities in heart rate and rhythm (arrhythmia) is shedding light on how the virus causes disruption in the body's cardiovascular system. The research, reported in the journal *Circulation Research*, explores recent findings that heart abnormalities are a common symptom of COVID-19 and could be a consequence of SARS-CoV-2 affecting the specialized pacemaker cells of the heart. The research was carried out by a team from Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City, which included Shuibing Chen, Ph.D., associate professor of surgery, chemical biology, and biochemistry; Robert Schwartz, MD, Ph.D., assistant professor of medicine; and Todd Evans, Ph.D., professor and vice-chair for research, in addition to Benjamin tenOever, Ph.D., a faculty member at the Grossman School of Medicine and NYU Langone Health at New York University.

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/covid-19-and-the-heart-can-sars-cov-2-cause-arrhythmia>

COVID-19: Omicron symptoms less severe than Delta variant, study concludes

The research concluded that those with Omicron were less likely to be admitted to hospital and lose their sense of smell than people with Delta. Symptoms do not tend to last as long in vaccinated individuals with the current dominant variant than in people with Delta, at 6.87 days versus 8.89 days. The findings support earlier studies that suggest the incubation time and period of infectiousness for Omicron is shorter than for previous COVID strains. Research showed that the loss of sense of smell appeared in 52.7% of Delta cases, while it showed up in less than 20% of Omicron cases - marking the biggest difference between the two.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-omicron-symptoms-less-severe-than-delta-variant-study-concludes-12584703>

Study sheds light on death spike in Hong Kong COVID-19 surge

Hong Kong's surge began in early January with a cluster of Omicron infections in a quarantine hotel. Its fifth wave peaked on Mar 4, along with a mortality rate of 37.7 per million population that was among the highest in the world during the pandemic. Officials reported 5,906 deaths as of Mar 21 during the Omicron surge. Of eligible people in Hong Kong, 64% had received at least two vaccine doses and 5% had gotten a booster dose, but coverage varied by age. Only 49% of people ages 60 and older had gotten at least two doses, with coverage declining as people got older. Among the deaths, 96% occurred in people ages 60 and older, and of those 70% were unvaccinated. "The high overall mortality rate during the ongoing 2022 Hong Kong Omicron COVID-19 outbreak is being driven by deaths among unvaccinated persons aged ≥ 60 years," the team wrote. In weighing other factors, the team compared Hong Kong's surge with New Zealand, which has a lower population density but, like Hong Kong, was thought to largely have vaccine-induced immunity due to vaccination combined with low infection levels during earlier waves.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/04/study-sheds-light-death-spike-hong-kong-covid-19-surge>