

Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

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Isolation Tips

COVID-19: Shanghai confirms seven coronavirus deaths of latest outbreak as strict lockdown continues

Seven people infected with coronavirus in Shanghai have died, the first new deaths during the city's current outbreak. The deaths come after roughly 26 million people were placed under extremely strict lockdown restrictions for several weeks. All of those who died are reported to have been elderly and with underlying health conditions. People are banned from leaving their homes and are relying on the government to deliver food, with small-scale protests breaking out as some people have been unable to get enough. Police in hazmat suits were seen dispersing people protesting against the city's harsh COVID rules last week.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-shanghai-confirms-seven-coronavirus-deaths-of-latest-outbreak-as-strict-lockdown-continues-12592775>

NSW to end COVID-19 household isolation rules

NSW and Victoria will end isolation requirements for household contacts of COVID-positive people by this weekend as both states pass the peak of the latest Omicron wave. The removal of one of the last major remaining pandemic restrictions means people who live with positive coronavirus cases will no longer need to isolate at home for seven days.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/nsw-set-to-end-covid-19-household-isolation-rules-20220419-p5aeli.html>

South Korea lifts most COVID precautions as new cases dip to two-month low

South Korea lifted almost all of its COVID-19 precautions on Monday in a major step towards a return to normal life as the Omicron variant recedes and daily infections retreated to a more than two-month low of fewer than 50,000. A midnight curfew on restaurants and other businesses was scrapped, along with a cap of 10 people allowed to gather. From next week, people will be allowed to eat snacks in cinemas and other indoor public facilities such as stadiums. People are still required to wear masks, however, with the government planning to review whether to lift a rule for masks outdoors in two weeks.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/south-korea-lifts-most-covid-precautions-new-cases-dip-two-month-low-2022-04-18/>

Shanghai urges cooperation with COVID tests amid rising scepticism

The Chinese city of Shanghai on Tuesday pleaded for public cooperation with a massive new push to test most of the population for COVID-19 as it tries to bring community transmission down to zero after nearly three weeks of lockdown. The plea came as some people refused to join PCR testing queues out of weariness after weeks of such requirements, or fear it puts them at greater risk of infection. Residents shared stories on social media about busloads of people being taken from their homes and sent into quarantine, including babies and the elderly.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-steps-up-quarantine-transfers-new-covid-cases-decline-2022-04-19/>

Hygiene Helpers

Rise in at-home testing means we could be undercounting Covid-19 cases even more than before

As the number of Covid-19 cases grows in the United States, experts wonder if the country fully

understands the current threat from the pandemic. The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation estimates that only 7% of positive Covid-19 cases in the US are being detected, meaning case rates are actually 14.5 times higher than officially reported. The last time the infection detection rate was this low was at the outset of the pandemic, in March 2020. "It's a dynamic situation, and things are changing fast," said Ali Mokdad, a professor and chief strategy officer of population health at the institute.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/18/health/covid-at-home-testing-data/index.html>

Italy averted 150000 COVID-19 deaths due to vaccinations

Infections, hospitalisations and deaths associated with COVID-19 could have been much higher without the help of vaccinations in Italy, a recent report published by the National Institute of Health (ISS) has found. The COVID-19 vaccination campaign has avoided about eight million cases, over 500,000 hospitalisations, 55,000 intensive care stays and about 150,000 deaths in Italy, according to the data. The estimate refers to the period between 27 December 2020, when the campaign started, and 31 January 2022. As of 18 April, Italy registered 162,000 COVID-19-related deaths.

https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/italy-averted-150000-covid-19-deaths-due-to-vaccinations/

COVID-19: Face masks no longer needed on public transport in the US after judge voids national mandate

People are no longer required to wear a mask on public transport in the US after a federal judge voided a national mandate, in a decision that has been described as "disappointing" by the White House. The judge, in Tampa, Florida, ruled that the national mask mandate, which covered airlines, airports, mass transit and taxis, was unlawful. District Judge Kathryn Kimball Mizelle said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) failed to justify its decision to extend the rule until 3 May and did not follow proper law making.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-face-masks-no-longer-needed-on-public-transport-in-the-us-after-judge-voids-national-mandate-12593471>

Moderna says dual variant booster with Beta more effective vs Omicron than current shot

Moderna Inc on Tuesday said a COVID-19 booster designed to target the Beta variant as well as the original coronavirus generated a better immune response against a number of virus variants including Omicron. Moderna said the results were a good sign for the company's plans for future shots targeting two COVID-19 variants. Dr. Jacqueline Miller, a top Moderna scientist, said the company had no immediate plans to file for authorization of the bivalent vaccine including the Beta variant. It will submit the data to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in order to lay the groundwork for a future bivalent vaccine candidate that includes the Omicron variant as a target.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/moderna-says-dual-variant-booster-with-beta-more-effective-vs-omicron-than-2022-04-19/>

Uber scraps mask requirement for riders, drivers as COVID cases fall

Uber has scrapped mandatory face masks for its riders and drivers in the United States, the ride-hailing company said on Tuesday, adding that riders have the option to cancel their trip if they feel uncomfortable with its move. The company introduced mask mandates for its drivers, riders and delivery workers around the world in May 2020 as COVID-19 cases rose.

<https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/uber-scraps-mask-requirement-riders-drivers-covid-cases-fall-2022-04-19/>

Canada to keep mask mandate after judge strikes down U.S. rule

Canada's government said on Tuesday it has no plans to stop requiring masks on planes after a Florida judge struck down a U.S. version of the law. "We are taking a layered approach to keeping travelers safe, and masks remain an incredibly useful tool in our arsenal against COVID-19," a spokesperson for Canada's Transport Minister wrote in an email. The spokesperson confirmed masks

will be required on Canadian airlines and on flights that depart from or arrive in Canada. The federal government also requires travelers to wear masks and track close contacts for 14 days after arriving in Canada.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/canada-keep-mask-mandate-after-judge-strikes-down-us-rule-2022-04-19/>

Community Activities

Heads accuse Government of 'ignoring Covid' by ending publication of school coronavirus data

Headteachers have criticised the Government for its “deeply troubling and ill-advised” decision to stop publishing data on the number of school absences in England linked to Covid-19. The National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) said the move appeared to be part of an “ignoring Covid plan” for schools. The Department for Education (DfE) published its fortnightly absence statistics for state schools in England today. Figures for 7 April showed that in schools that had not broken up for Easter, attendance stood at 89.1 per cent, compared to 88.6 per cent on 31 March.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/education/headteachers-government-ignoring-covid-ending-publication-school-coronavirus-statistics-1582792>

COVID-19 vaccines go to waste as rollout stalls

Australian medical professionals are speaking out about mass amounts of COVID-19 vaccine wastage, calling for more government direction in donating the vaccines to developing countries. It comes as GPs are reportedly throwing out thousands of expired vaccines due to dwindling demand. More than 95 per cent of Australians over the age of 16 have received two doses, and about 300,000 vaccines are administered nationally each week.

<https://www.9news.com.au/national/expiring-vaccines-should-be-donated-before-they-expire-doctors-say/e505a3a5-34d7-4dcb-b9d0-0fb48f5d68e4>

Hong Kong zero-COVID policies create mountains of plastic waste

Hong Kong arrivals meet plastic everywhere in quarantine hotels: Remote controls are wrapped in cellophane, pillows are encased in plastic bags, food comes with plastic cutlery. Hong Kong’s strict quarantine policies - intended to halt COVID-19 at the border and in the community - have been criticised for damaging the economy and mental health. Environmentalists say the policies are also hurting the environment by generating excess waste.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/hong-kong-zero-covid-policies-create-mountains-plastic-waste-2022-04-19/>

Working Remotely

The end of sick days: has WFH made it harder to take time off?

Zoom calls, email and Slack channels have facilitated work during lockdowns and made it easy for employees to stay at home if they had Covid, but they have also made it harder to take sick days. Elizabeth Rimmer, chief executive of LawCare, a charity that supports good mental health in the legal community, has joined numerous webinars and virtual meetings in recent weeks attended by people struggling on with Covid. “They didn’t look good. [People] can lie in bed with their laptop and power through even if they are unwell.” Jane van Zyl, chief executive of Working Families, an advocacy group, says: “We have to be mindful that the lesson from the pandemic is flexible working and not working round the clock.”

<https://www.ft.com/content/bc9e39ce-8762-4e70-8aa2-2e33b23b80fe>

Virtual Classrooms

The Gamification Of EdTech: Virtual Learning On The Road To The Metaverse

Exposure quarantines pushed remote classroom learning from the occasional into the commonplace. Both teachers and educational institutions are scrambling to identify new ways to improve distance

learning experiences, engagement and equal access to tools and facilities in the post-pandemic world. Increasingly, as 76% of U.S. kids play video games weekly, educators are looking to video games as a solution. The gamification of remote learning is moving to the next level through immersive virtual reality (VR) content, which is already used to train employees in construction, motor and aviation industries.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2022/04/18/the-gamification-of-edtech-virtual-learning-on-the-road-to-the-metaverse/>

Research suggests that virtual learning is the most popular method for adults

New unweighted research into virtual learning, commissioned by learning management system provider Digits, has shown that watching online videos and taking part in online courses are now the most popular learning methods in the UK. On average, over one in four of the 2,000 people polled say they most enjoy learning via videos and courses on the internet (29% and 28% respectively), while face-to-face options, such as in-person classes with others present and one-to-one tutoring, were favoured by less than one in four people (23% and 19% respectively).

<https://edtechnology.co.uk/teaching-and-learning/research-suggests-that-virtual-learning-is-the-most-popular-method-for-adults/>

Public Policies

Ocugen gains rights to market Covid-19 vaccine in Mexico

Ocugen and Bharat Biotech have signed an amendment to their co-development, supply and commercialisation agreement for expanding the former's exclusive territory to include marketing of their Covid-19 vaccine, Covaxin (BBV152), in Mexico. With the latest development, Ocugen will have complete commercialisation rights to Covaxin in North America. The expansion of licence between the companies for supply in Mexico has the same profit share structure as in the US.

<https://www.pharmaceutical-technology.com/news/ocugen-rights-vaccine-mexico/>

Japan's MHLW grants approval for Takeda's Covid-19 vaccine

The Japan Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) has granted manufacturing and marketing approval to Takeda's Covid-19 vaccine, Nuvaxovid Intramuscular Injection, for initial and booster vaccination in people of the age 18 years and above. The recombinant protein-based Covid-19 vaccine contains Matrix-M adjuvant. It can be stored at a refrigerated temperature of 2°C to 8°C and requires a standard vaccine supply chain for transportation. In August 2020, Takeda and Novavax entered a collaboration to develop, manufacture and supply the latter's Covid-19 vaccine candidate in Japan.

<https://www.pharmaceutical-technology.com/news/japan-mhlw-takeda-vaccine/>

Covid-19: India accused of trying to delay WHO revision of death toll

India has been accused of attempting to delay an effort by the World Health Organization to revise the global death toll from Covid-19 after its calculations suggested that the country had undercounted its dead by an estimated 3.5 million. India's official number of deaths from Covid is 520,000. But according to in-depth analysis and investigations into the data by WHO, the total is more than 4 million, which would be by far the highest country death toll in the world. The figure tallies with previous estimates made by scientists, data analysts and medical journals that the true number of deaths from Covid in India was up to 10 times higher than that recorded in official statistics.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/18/covid-19-india-accused-of-attempting-to-delay-who-revision-of-death-toll>

Japan health ministry panel approves Novavax's COVID-19 vaccine

A Japanese Health Ministry committee said on Monday it has approved Novavax Inc's COVID-19

vaccine, setting the stage for full approval of the country's fourth shot for the coronavirus. The Japanese government has agreed to purchase 150 million doses of Novavax's recombinant protein type vaccine, which is to be manufactured domestically by Takeda Pharmaceutical Co.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japan-health-ministry-panel-approves-novavaxs-covid-19-vaccine-kyodo-2022-04-18/>

Taiwan says COVID vaccine talks held up on China sales deal

Talks on Taiwan buying the child version of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine have stalled as Pfizer does not have the right to sell it and BioNTech and its Chinese partner do not make it, a Taiwanese minister said on Monday. The sales rights for the vaccine in Greater China, including Taiwan, belong to BioNTech and its Chinese sales agent, Shanghai Fosun. A deal for the main version of the vaccine ran aground last year after Taiwan accused China of political interference, which Beijing denied.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/taiwan-says-covid-vaccine-talks-held-up-china-sales-deal-2022-04-18/>

Second Global COVID-19 Summit scheduled for May 12

A second Global COVID-19 Summit will be held virtually next month for countries to discuss efforts to end the pandemic and prepare for future health threats, according to a joint statement on Monday. "The emergence and spread of new variants, like Omicron, have reinforced the need for a strategy aimed at controlling COVID-19 worldwide," the White House said in a news release with the Group of Seven and Group of 20 nations.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/second-global-covid-19-summit-scheduled-may-12-2022-04-18/>

Poland declines to take or pay for more COVID-19 vaccines for now

Poland will not take or pay for more doses of COVID-19 vaccine under the European Union's supply contract, its health minister said on Tuesday, setting the stage for a legal battle with manufacturers. Poland, along with other EU members, has been receiving COVID-19 vaccines during the coronavirus pandemic under supply contracts agreed between the European Commission and vaccine makers such as BioNTech and Pfizer or Moderna. However, the country has seen lower vaccine uptake than most of the European Union and has surplus vaccine stock, part of which it has sold or donated to other countries.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/poland-says-it-wont-take-or-pay-more-covid-19-vaccines-now-2022-04-19/>

Analysis: China's Xi sticks with COVID stance despite anger, economic headwinds

For many leaders, mounting public anger and a rapidly worsening economic outlook would be cause for worry and a policy rethink. But Chinese President Xi Jinping, who doubtless would prefer smoother sailing in the run-up to a third leadership term, is doubling down on a signature "dynamic zero" COVID-19 policy that has been increasingly tested by the more infectious Omicron variant. Xi's high-profile reiteration of the policy, made last week during a visit to the southern island of Hainan that capped days of state-media support for it, reflects a political imperative not to reverse course and look weak in a year in which he needs to appear strong, analysts said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-xi-sticks-with-covid-stance-despite-anger-economic-headwinds-2022-04-19/>

Maintaining Services

Analysis: Demand for Pfizer's COVID pills lags around the world

Worldwide demand for Pfizer's oral COVID-19 antiviral treatment Paxlovid has been unexpectedly light due to complicated eligibility requirements, reduced testing, and potential for drug interactions, a Reuters review of data and interviews with experts has found. Demand also has been hampered

by the perception that Omicron infections are not that severe. Paxlovid was expected to be a major tool in the fight against COVID after it reduced hospitalizations or deaths in high-risk patients by around 90% in a clinical trial.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/demand-pfizers-covid-pills-lags-around-world-2022-04-19/>

J&J pulls COVID vaccine sales forecast due to low demand, supply glut

Johnson & Johnson on Tuesday rescinded its forecast for sales of its COVID-19 vaccine, as hesitancy in low income countries has led to a glut of supply of a shot once hoped to be the inoculation of choice for the developing world. The company had previously predicted as much as \$3.5 billion in 2022 sales from the single-dose vaccine, but demand has withered. Still, the company reported strong results for its medical devices business and raised its dividend, driving shares up around 3%.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/johnson-johnson-suspends-sales-forecast-covid-19-vaccine-2022-04-19/>

Taiwan faces tough choices as COVID-19 cases hit record levels

Last Tuesday, Taiwan's health minister said the island could see 1,000 local COVID-19 cases a day by the end of the month. It hit that level just three days later, and must now choose between living with the virus like New Zealand or sticking with elimination strategies like in Hong Kong. Local cases hit a new record of 1,390 on Monday and have averaged 1,176 over the past five days. The surge rattled many of the island's 23 million people, which has seen just 854 COVID-19 deaths from local infection over the entire pandemic. "The scale of the pandemic right now is very large," Health Minister Chen Shih-chung said at a briefing Friday, adding Taiwan may one day see tens of thousands — or even millions — of cases. "The point is not about the case counts, but about whether we can prevent a disastrous impact."

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/04/19/asia-pacific/taiwan-covid-cases/>

Cairo's Ramadan street feasts return after coronavirus suspension

Communal meals in which hundreds of people pack around long tables to break their fast during the holy month of Ramadan have returned to Egypt's streets after being widely suspended for the past two years due to COVID-19 restrictions. Egypt has been hit by successive waves of COVID-19 infections and imposed a nighttime curfew that coincided with Ramadan in 2020. Most restrictions have now been lifted.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/cairos-ramadan-street-feasts-return-after-coronavirus-suspension-2022-04-19/>

Healthcare Innovations

Global data reveal half may have long COVID 4 months on

Worldwide, 49% of COVID-19 survivors reported persistent symptoms 4 months after diagnosis, estimates a meta-analysis of 31 studies published late last week in The Journal of Infectious Diseases. University of Michigan researchers, who conducted a systematic review on Jul 5, 2021, also found the prevalence of long COVID at 1 month at 37%, while it was 25% at 2 months and 32% at 3 months. Fifty studies were identified in the review, and 41 were included in a quantitative synthesis, and 31 reporting overall prevalence were meta-analyzed. The 50 studies included a total of 1,680,003 COVID-19 patients, including those who were hospitalized (67,161 patients from 22 studies), nonhospitalized (4,165 from 5 studies), and any COVID-19 patients, regardless of hospitalization status (1,608,677 from 23 studies).

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/04/global-data-reveal-half-may-have-long-covid-4-months>

Omicron Covid Wave Hit Unvaccinated Children Hardest: CDC

Almost 90% of U.S. children hospitalized for Covid during the omicron wave this winter were unvaccinated, according to a government study. Omicron caused a record-breaking number of

pediatric hospitalizations from December to February, and national data on hundreds of kids aged 5 to 11 highlight the importance of vaccinating them, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in the report. “Increasing vaccination coverage among children, particularly among racial and ethnic minority groups disproportionately affected by Covid-19, is critical to preventing Covid-19-associated hospitalization and severe outcomes,” the CDC said.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-19/unvaccinated-kids-bore-brunt-of-omicron-wave-cdc-report-says>

Getting covid-19 over 50 increases the risk of getting shingles

People 50 and older who have had a mild case of covid-19 are 15 percent more likely to develop shingles (herpes zoster) within six months than are those who have not been infected by the coronavirus, according to research published in the journal *Open Forum Infectious Diseases*. The risk, however, was found to be even greater for older people who were hospitalized because of a more severe covid case, making them 21 percent more likely to develop shingles than those who did not have covid. The findings stem from data on roughly 2 million people — nearly 400,000 diagnosed with covid-19 and 1.6 million who had no coronavirus infection. Shingles is an outbreak of a painful rash or blisters on the skin, most often occurring on one side of the torso.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/04/19/shingles-and-covid-over-50/>