

# Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

## 9th Aug 2022

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### Isolation Tips

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#### **Hong Kong Cuts Covid-19 Quarantine to 3 Days**

The city's government cut the Covid-19 quarantine period for inbound travelers to three days from seven, easing a restriction many saw as excessive but falling short of what businesses say is needed to restore the connectivity vital to its role as Asia's leading global financial center. From Friday, travelers arriving in Hong Kong will be allowed to leave their quarantine hotels after three days, officials said at a briefing Monday. Over the following four days, they won't be allowed into places now requiring a vaccine pass, such as gyms, bars and restaurants, but they will be able to go to work, shop at supermarkets and use public transport, provided they test negative for the coronavirus. The city has been caught between sticking to stringent antivirus controls in line with Beijing's zero-Covid policy and trying to retain its appeal as an open and globally connected base for business.

[https://www.wsj.com/articles/hong-kong-cuts-quarantine-to-3-days-seeks-exit-from-covid-isolation-11659927273?mod=hp\\_listc\\_pos1](https://www.wsj.com/articles/hong-kong-cuts-quarantine-to-3-days-seeks-exit-from-covid-isolation-11659927273?mod=hp_listc_pos1)

#### **China's Tibet region faces rare COVID flareup, fresh curbs imposed**

The Chinese autonomous region of Tibet, which had barely reported COVID patients for more than two years, is facing a spate of new infections, forcing it to impose various restriction in its second largest city. Tibet reported one infection with confirmed symptoms in January 2020, and then remained clear of cases for over 900 days, the best record among Chinese regions and provinces under China's "dynamic zero COVID" policy. Its disclosure of asymptomatic infections, which China counts separately, was less clear.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/lhasa-city-detects-18-individuals-tested-positive-covid-19-preliminary-screening-2022-08-08/>

### Hygiene Helpers

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#### **Japan to offer omicron COVID shots to people vaccinated at least twice**

New COVID-19 vaccines considered effective against the omicron variant will be available to all people who have completed at least two inoculations from as early as mid-October, the government said Monday. The bivalent vaccines, so named for their combination of ingredients deriving from existing COVID-19 shots and from omicron's BA.1 subvariant, have been reported to provide some increase in neutralizing antibodies against the BA.5 subtype currently prevalent across the country. The plan, which has received approval from a health ministry panel, comes at a time when Japan is experiencing a seventh wave of infections fueled by the highly transmissible BA.5 subvariant, with its daily cases hitting an all-time high of about 250,000 last Wednesday.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/08/08/national/japan-omicron-vaccine-eligibility/>

#### **Study: COVID campus vaccine mandates saved lives. Are they still in place?**

A new study of coronavirus vaccine mandates for students at U.S. colleges and universities suggests the mandates saved about 7,300 lives last fall. "I thought the study that came out (last month) was telling," said Daniel Hurley, CEO of the Michigan Association of State Universities, which represents all 15 public universities in Michigan. "Likely those policies, collectively, saved thousands of lives in this country ... When you put it in those terms, that's significant." A Free Press spot check showed that many Michigan colleges and universities plan to keep their vaccine policies in place for the new

school year.

<https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2022/08/08/covid-vaccine-mandates-college-campuses/10251236002/>

### **COVID-19 Vaccines Induce Better Long-Term Immunity than Infection**

To answer these questions, Shane Crotty and his group at the La Jolla Institute for Immunology performed a head-to-head comparison of four currently used COVID-19 vaccines that target the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein: Pfizer/BioNtech (mRNA), Moderna (mRNA), Janssen/J&J (adenovirus), and Novavax (recombinant protein). In a six-month longitudinal study published in Cell, the researchers examined blood samples from vaccinated and recently infected people for SARS-CoV-2 spike-specific immune responses.

<https://www.the-scientist.com/sponsored-article/covid-19-vaccines-induce-better-long-term-immunity-than-infection-70308>

## **Community Activities**

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### **Most Parents Are Saying No to Covid-19 Vaccines for Toddlers**

Parents are having their say about the Covid-19 vaccines for children under 5, and for most, the answer so far is no. More than a month after the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended shots for about 17.4 million children ages 6 months through 4 years, about 4% to 5% of them have received a shot, according to the most recent agency data and population estimates from the American Academy of Pediatrics. By contrast, the vaccination rate for children 5 to 11 years reached about 18% a month after the CDC first recommended shots last November. The rate now stands at about 38%. “The rates of uptake are just not what we would hope,” said Brannon Traxler, director of public health for the Department of Health and Environmental Control in South Carolina, where recent data show about 2% of the state’s babies and toddlers have received at least one dose. “This is a common theme across the country in many places.”

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/most-parents-are-saying-no-to-covid-19-vaccines-for-toddlers-11659887903>

## **Working Remotely**

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### **Working from home more alluring to everyday Australians**

In Australia, big businesses are trying to entice their employees back into the office for two or three days a week – but the lure of working from home is winning.

<https://www.skynews.com.au/opinion/working-from-home-more-alluring-to-everyday-australians/video/7bf4235ab3ec661064dcfbb962352162>

## **Virtual Classrooms**

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### **Oklahoma invests \$5M in online math tutoring program**

The Oklahoma education department’s program is part of growing efforts to address learning loss through tutoring — though approaches vary by state and district. As U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona has urged states and districts to spend pandemic relief funds on high-dosage tutoring, Oklahoma is doing just that by using \$5 million of COVID-19 aid dollars for its online math tutoring program through summer 2024.

<https://www.k12dive.com/news/oklahoma-invests-5m-in-online-math-tutoring-program/629070/>

### **Why online learning must remain part of the education toolkit**

Numerous studies and anecdotes point to deteriorating student performance during the pandemic and cite remote instruction as the reason. There seems to be a cause-and-effect bandwagon that a strict diet of online learning is bad for students at any level and a return to in-person instruction is the answer. However, students need the best tools we can give them, in tandem, all the time, in combinations that work for them. Those tools include remote and online instruction.

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/why-online-learning-must-remain-part-education-toolkit>

## Public Policies

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### Thailand to Lower Covid-19 to Same Disease Category as Influenza

Thailand will downgrade Covid-19 from a “dangerous” communicable disease to one that “needs monitoring” starting from October, as the country’s virus situation has started to stabilize, according to the Ministry of Public Health. The move, which will remove Covid-19 from the same category as plague and smallpox to the same level as influenza and dengue, is to reflect the reality of the situation in Thailand, said Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul. The move reflects Thailand’s health-system readiness, availability of treatments and “appropriate self-protection behavior” of people around the country, Anutin said in a statement.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-08-08/thailand-to-lower-covid-19-to-same-disease-category-as-influenza>

## Maintaining Services

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### Chile's Easter Island reopens to tourists after pandemic shutdown

Chile's Easter Island received its first group of tourists on Thursday after closing its borders for more than two years due to the coronavirus pandemic. Easter Island, over 2,000 miles (3,219 km) from the coast of Chile, has over a thousand stone statues -- giant heads that were carved centuries ago by the island's inhabitants -- which have brought it fame and UNESCO World Heritage Site status. "(Easter Island) is the biggest open air museum in the world," said Pedro Edmunds, the mayor of Easter Island, adding that it was time to open the island after it shut its borders 868 days ago.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/chiles-easter-island-reopens-tourists-after-pandemic-shutdown-2022-08-05/>

## Healthcare Innovations

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### Immunity for common cold coronaviruses may ward off severe covid-19

People with a stronger immune response to the coronaviruses that cause common cold-like symptoms may be better protected against covid-19, raising hopes that a pan-coronavirus vaccine could be achieved. Ricardo da Silva Antunes at La Jolla Institute for Immunology in California and his colleagues analysed blood samples collected from 32 people between 2016 and 2019, before covid-19 emerged. Multiple samples were taken from each person over six months to three years. The team wanted to see how the immune cells in these samples responded to four coronaviruses that cause common cold-like symptoms as well as the original SARS-CoV-2 strain, which emerged in Wuhan, China, at the end of 2019.

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2332719-immunity-for-common-cold-coronaviruses-may-ward-off-severe-covid-19/>

### Sperm not affected nine months after COVID-19 mRNA vaccination

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccines are effective in reducing deaths due to infection with the causative severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). Furthermore, widespread vaccination against COVID-19 has successfully reduced infection rates and severe COVID-19 outcomes. SARS-CoV-2 infection has previously been reported to adversely affect male fertility, as demonstrated by a temporary reduction in sperm production. Although current COVID-19 messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA) vaccines have been associated with minimal or no effect on male fertility, concerns regarding their potential reproductive toxicity remain a major cause of vaccine hesitancy.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20220808/Sperm-not-affected-nine-months-after-COVID-19-mRNA-vaccination.aspx>