

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

3rd Dec 2020

News Highlights

UK becomes first western country to authorise use of Pfizer vaccine, but weathers EU criticism

The UK has become the west's first country to grant emergency authorisation use to Pfizer's vaccine against the coronavirus. [The decision, however, did not receive full-throated congratulations from EU officials.](#) One EU lawmaker called the decision 'hasty.' UK officials pushed back, saying their procedures matched international standards.

Mass vaccination campaign planned in Russia

Russia plans a mass vaccination campaign with Sputnik-V, the vaccine claimed to be 92% effective in protecting against the novel coronavirus. [President Vladimir Putin said the country will have produced two million doses of Sputnik-V in the coming days.](#) Health workers and teachers are to be the first in line to receive the shot.

What the run up to Christmas could look like in Covid-hit Italy and Spain

Both Italy and Spain are facing a very different run up to Christmas. In the festive period, [Spain is breaking with many long-standing traditions,](#) with many popular displays in stores and parades either cancelled or conducted virtually. [In Italy, the run up to the festive period will see gatherings restricted, curfews \(including on Christmas Eve\) and travel limited.](#)

South Australian contact tracing scandal: Pizza worker involved not to be charged

Misleading contact tracing information given to officials by a man in South Australia resulted in a statewide lockdown. [However, the man in question will not face criminal charges.](#) A six-day lockdown was imposed because of the misinformation - but ended after three days when fresh information came to light. Officials say the criminal investigation is complete.

Lockdown Exit

Covid-19: Traders hope shoppers return for Christmas after lockdown

Many businesses are getting ready to welcome back customers after four weeks of closure. When England's new tier system comes into force on Wednesday, shops, gyms and personal care services, like hairdressers, can reopen, if they are Covid-secure. But pubs and bars in tier three will be unable to open and only if they serve a "substantial meal" under tier two.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-55139049>

Queues form as England's high streets reopen after lockdown

England's high streets were back in business on Wednesday - but shoppers returned slowly, with queues outside only a few stores such as Primark and Debenhams, which had announced it was going into liquidation the day before. Non-essential stores in England reopened after the month-long lockdown brought in by the government in its latest effort to control the spread of Covid-19. The

number of shoppers out and about on English high streets, retail parks and in shopping centres on Wednesday was up 85% on the same day a week before, but the expected rush to make up for lost time did not materialise: numbers were still down by 22% on last year.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/dec/02/queues-form-as-england-high-streets-reopen-after-lockdown>

SA pizza bar worker who misled contact tracers will not be charged

The Woodville Pizza shop worker who misled contact tracers will not be charged. South Australia's Assistant Police Commissioner Peter Harvey said the facts of the original phone conversation between contact tracers and the man, a Spanish national, cannot be used in court. In short, the evidence compiled by police has been judged not to succeed if they took the case to court.

<https://www.9news.com.au/national/south-australia-coronavirus-news-pizza-worker-will-not-be-charged/68c1b4bc-9303-4fd5-ad08-2d9b7b09eb23>

No charges for pizza bar worker who 'misled' South Australian authorities, sparking coronavirus lockdown

No criminal charges will flow from misleading information given to South Australian health officials which sparked last month's short-lived statewide lockdown as a cluster of coronavirus case emerged in Adelaide. Police have conducted an investigation into a man who initially told contact tracers he had only picked up a takeaway meal from a venue, known to be a coronavirus hotspot, but later conceded he had worked at the business. His initial information prompted SA to be placed into a six-day lockdown amid fears of growing community transmission, with officials later cutting that short to just three days after the fresh information was revealed.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/no-charges-for-pizza-bar-worker-who-misled-south-australian-authorities-sparking-coronavirus-lockdown>

Australia's economy powers out of Covid-19 recession

Australia has exited its first recession in almost three decades, with the economy growing by a better than expected 3.3 per cent in the September quarter, reflecting authorities' adept handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. A boom in household spending drove the recovery as the easing of social distancing restrictions prompted a 7.9 per cent jump in spending on goods and services in the third quarter. However, the damage wrought by stringent lockdowns was expressed in the annual growth figure, which showed economic activity fell 3.8 per cent in the year to end September.

<https://www.ft.com/content/ac98dd24-9edb-4618-a9af-5ab4cf892262>

Covid-19: Economic effects expected to endure in New Zealand

In New Zealand, a global survey by HSBC bank showed nearly two-thirds of local firms were doubtful they would return to pre-Covid levels of profitability in the next year. That compared with 55 percent of businesses globally. The survey showed local firms were also less optimistic about the prospect of sales growth in the next 12 months. HSBC interim chief executive Rob Roughan said New Zealand businesses had performed well given that firms overseas were able to trade normally throughout the pandemic.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/business/431973/covid-19-economic-effects-expected-to-endure-in-new-zealand>

Ukraine scraps weekend lockdowns against COVID pandemic: PM

Ukraine has lifted weekend lockdown restrictions in place to fight the spread of the coronavirus pandemic but is still considering whether to introduce a tighter lockdown at a later stage, Prime Minister Denys Shmygal said on Wednesday. The government last month introduced a lockdown at weekends, closing or restricting most businesses except essential services such as grocery shops, pharmacies, hospitals and transport.

<https://in.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-ukraine/ukraine-scraps-weekend-lockdowns-against-covid-pandemic-pm-id!NKBN28C1U3?il=0>

Pfizer jab will be distributed at hospitals first, then GP surgeries and stadiums

Initial batches of the Pfizer/BioNTech jab are already heading to Britain after it was approved by UK regulators. Vaccine will be distributed at hospitals first, and then GPs and city hubs in stadiums and conference centres. The UK has ordered 40million doses in total, with 10m due by the end of 2020 and the rest coming next year

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9010097/Pfizer-jab-distributed-hospitals-GP-surgeries-stadiums.html>

Berlin plans six mass COVID-19 vaccination centres handling 4000 people a day

Berlin is racing to open six mass vaccination centres capable of handling up to 4000 people per day by mid-December, the project co-ordinator says, as the city waits for authorities to approve the first vaccines. An empty trade fair hall, two airport terminals, a concert arena, a velodrome and an ice rink will be turned into six vaccination centres where city officials plan to administer up to 900,000 shots against the coronavirus in the first three months.

<https://www.smh.com.au/world/europe/berlin-plans-six-mass-covid-19-vaccination-centres-handling-4000-people-a-day-20201127-p56ieb.html>

Exit Strategies

CVS, Walgreens to Give Covid-19 Shots at Nursing Homes

CVS Health Corp. and Walgreens Boots Alliance Inc. are preparing to administer Covid-19 vaccines in tens of thousands of nursing homes and assisted-living facilities across the country, with shots possibly rolling out in just weeks. Federal advisers on Tuesday urged that residents at long-term care centers be first in line for the Covid shots, along with at-risk health-care workers. In making the recommendation, the advisers said the move would be well-supported by a new partnership formed between the Department of Health and Human Services and pharmacy companies to vaccinate at the centers.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-12-02/cvs-walgreens-bracing-to-give-covid-19-shots-at-nursing-homes>

U.S. employers could mandate a COVID-19 vaccine, but are unlikely to do so -experts

Private U.S. companies have the right under the law to require employees to get vaccinated against COVID-19, but are unlikely to do so because of the risks of legal and cultural backlash, experts said. Companies are still in the early stages of navigating access and distribution of vaccines against the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, but inoculation is considered the key to safely resume operations at crowded warehouses, factory lines and on sales floors.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/us-employers-could-mandate-a-covid-19-vaccine-but-are-unlikely-to-do-so-experts/ar-BB1byTrI>

Within Hours of U.K., Putin Orders Start of Mass Covid-19 Shots

President Vladimir Putin said Russia should begin general vaccination of the population against Covid-19 next week, the same day the U.K. became the first western country to approve a vaccine for use. "Let's take this first step," Putin told officials Wednesday during a video conference on the opening of Covid-19 hospitals built by the Defense Ministry. More than 2 million doses of Russia's Sputnik V vaccine will be ready for use within the next few days and "this gives us the opportunity to start vaccination on a mass scale," he said.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/putin-orders-start-of-mass-covid-19-shots-hours-after-u-k/ar-BB1bz1CG>

PM Johnson says COVID-19 vaccines should be voluntary

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson might be persuaded to take a COVID-19 vaccination on television to show it is safe but he would not have one before those in greater need, his press secretary said on Wednesday. Johnson, 56, who spent time in intensive care earlier this year after contracting COVID-19, has hailed the UK approval of Pfizer Inc's vaccine as a global win and ray of

hope amid a pandemic that has hurt the economy and upended normal life.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain-vaccine-jo-idUSKBN28C1P4>

Covid-19 vaccine: 'Don't get your hopes up for getting job soon', warns Boris Johnson

Boris Johnson has urged Brits not to get their hopes up for getting the new coronavirus vaccine soon. It comes after vaccine chiefs announced the priority list for vaccinations - which puts elderly people in care homes and their carers at the front of the queue. The Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisation (JCVI) updated the list of priorities today, after the vaccine was approved by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Authority (MHRA). First in line will be care home residents and carers, followed by people over 80 and frontline health and care workers.

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/covid-19-vaccine-dont-your-23103580>

Welsh care home residents unlikely to get Covid-19 vaccine

Vaccinating elderly residents against Covid-19 in more than 1,000 care home across Wales presents challenges that are difficult to overcome, the health and social care minister has said. Vaughan Gething said problems with the transportation and storage of the Pfizer vaccine, as it needs to be kept below -70C, meant it would be difficult to vaccinate vulnerable care home residents. He said that when the Oxford vaccine was approved for use, it would be a better option as it could be more easily stored.

<https://www.eveningexpress.co.uk/news/uk/welsh-care-home-residents-unlikely-to-get-covid-19-vaccine/>

Canada unveils largest economic relief package since WW2

Canada's federal government will spend C\$100bn (\$77bn, £58bn) to kick-start the country's post-pandemic economy. It is "the largest economic relief package for our country since the Second World War", Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland said. The wide-ranging plan includes targeted relief for hard-hit business sectors, investments in long-term care homes and distribution of a Covid-19 vaccine.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-55139229>

Italy's health minister hopes first COVID-19 vaccines can start in January

Italians will not be able to attend midnight mass or move between regions over the Christmas period, a top health ministry official said on Wednesday, as the country battles high coronavirus infection rates and deaths. Italy has been reporting more daily COVID-19 fatalities than any other European nation in recent weeks and, while the increase in new cases and hospital admissions is slowing, the government is worried about gatherings over Christmas. The existing restrictions, which have put much of the industrial north under partial lockdown and limited business activity, are due to expire on Thursday.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-italy/italys-health-minister-hopes-first-covid-19-vaccines-can-start-in-january-idUSKBN28C14F>

Austrian schools, shops to reopen, as lockdown eases, ski opening looms

Austria on Wednesday chose a middle way in its standoff with neighbouring countries on whether skiing over Christmas is safe, by letting resorts reopen on Christmas Eve but making ski holidays virtually impossible. In an apparent concession to Rome, Berlin and Paris, which had expressed concern about cross-border trips, Austria also said it was introducing a new quarantine requirement for anyone arriving from their countries and many more. As of Monday, shops, museums and libraries in Austria will be allowed to reopen and primary schools will return to in-person learning. Christmas markets, however, will remain banned.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-austria/austrian-schools-shops-to-reopen-as-lockdown-eases-ski-opening-looms-idUKKBN28C1QB?il=0>

Factbox: Not so Merry Christmas looms for coronavirus-hit Europe

Governments across Europe are trying to navigate between avoiding spreading the coronavirus over the Christmas holiday season and allowing people to celebrate with family and friends. This article sums up some of the measures that will be adopted for year-end festivities by some European countries

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-holidays/factbox-not-so-merry-christmas-looms-for-coronavirus-hit-europe-idUKKBN28C220>

NHS volunteers to be trained up to give Covid vaccine and 'deal with adverse effects'

In England, hundreds of thousands of volunteers will be called upon to deliver a mass roll out of the coronavirus vaccine, according to reports. The NHS recruited more than 750,000 people in April, with duties to include delivering goods to the elderly and taking patients for hospital appointments. But with the vaccine - which could be approved by next week - seen as the best shot at stamping out Covid-19 for good, they are now reportedly set to be trained up to administer the actual jobs.

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/nhs-volunteers-trained-up-give-23101386>

Coronavirus: How Germany is preparing for a vaccination drive

Germany's federal and state governments came up with their "national vaccination strategy" early in November. It aims to build up infrastructure as quickly as possible to enable mass-vaccination programs. The work is a little complex and ad hoc, not least because, as the 15-page document concedes, it's not yet clear which vaccines will be available when, and in what quantities. But the plan's main aim is to avoid the opposite scenario: that a working vaccine cannot be distributed to the people because the logistics are lacking.

<https://www.dw.com/en/coronavirus-how-germany-is-preparing-for-a-vaccination-drive/a-55741314>

COVID-19: Boris Johnson could take coronavirus vaccine live on TV

Boris Johnson could take the coronavirus vaccine live on TV, his press secretary has suggested. Allegra Stratton, the former journalist who will lead the new Downing Street briefings, left open the possibility as a way to convince people to get the jab. A plan is being drawn up on how to distribute the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine now it has been given the green light by the UK's medicines regulator, with the first doses administered next week. It comes as a YouGov poll of more than 5,300 people found one in five have reservations over its safety.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-boris-johnson-could-take-coronavirus-vaccine-live-on-tv-12149181>

NHS volunteers to be trained up to give Covid vaccine and 'deal with adverse effects'

More than 750,000 volunteers, recruited in April, are being called upon to deliver the jobs as well as deal with any adverse effects as the NHS prepares dozens of mass vaccination centres

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/nhs-volunteers-trained-up-give-23101386>

Partisan Exits

EU criticises 'hasty' UK approval of COVID-19 vaccine

The European Union criticised Britain's rapid approval of Pfizer and BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine on Wednesday, saying its own procedure was more thorough, after Britain became the first western country to endorse a COVID-19 shot. The move to grant emergency authorisation to the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine has been seen by many as a political coup for UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who has led his country out of the EU and faced criticism for his handling of the pandemic. The decision was made under an ultra-fast, emergency approval process, which allowed the British drugs regulator to temporarily authorise the vaccine only 10 days after it began examining data from large-scale trials.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain-eu/eu-criticises-hasty-uk-approval-of-covid-19-vaccine-idUSKBN28C12X>

Putin orders start of Russia's mass COVID vaccination programme

Russian President Vladimir Putin has ordered the country's authorities to begin mass voluntary vaccinations against COVID-19 from next week onwards. The move, announced on Wednesday, came after Russia said last month that its domestically produced Sputnik V vaccine was 92 percent effective at protecting people from COVID-19, according to interim results. The country will have produced two million doses of the vaccine within the next few days, Putin said, noting that teachers and medics will be the first to receive shots. "Let's agree on this - you will not report to me next week, but you will start mass vaccination ... let's get to work already," he told Deputy Prime Minister Tatyana Golikova. The Kremlin earlier gave assurances that Russians were first in line to be vaccinated, with Moscow also discussing supply deals with other countries.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/2/putin-orders-start-of-russias-mass-covid-vaccination-programme>

Continued Lockdown

Germany to keep restaurants, hotels closed until January 10 - sources

Germany will extend restrictive measures designed to stem a tide of new COVID-19 infections until Jan. 10, Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Wednesday after talks with German state leaders. The measures, which had been due to expire on Dec. 20, include keeping restaurants and hotels shut and limiting private gatherings to five people from two households. "The states will extend their measures from December 20 until January 10," Merkel told a news conference, adding that another round of consultations would be held on Jan. 4. "In principle things will remain as they are." While the daily rise in infection numbers has started to fall, Germany reported its highest single-day death toll on Wednesday since the start of the pandemic, and regions that had been spared the worst are seeing case numbers surge.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-germany/germany-to-keep-restaurants-hotels-closed-until-january-10-sources-idUSKBN28C175>

Greece's undeclared workers hit hard by virus lockdown

Every time Elisa drives to a client's house for a hairdressing job, she makes sure to pack a bag of groceries in the car in case she is stopped by Greek police. Skirting the country's strict lockdown rules to put food on the table, she is among thousands of undeclared Greek workers facing additional hardship during the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic. "I write out a declaration that I'm going shopping, and I mainly work in my neighbourhood," says the 32-year-old.

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20201202-greece-s-undeclared-workers-hit-hard-by-virus-lockdown>

Coronavirus: France to impose border checks to stop skiing abroad

Random border checks will be imposed to stop French holidaymakers going to ski in neighbouring Switzerland, Prime Minister Jean Castex has said. France, in common with Germany and Italy, is shutting its ski lifts over Christmas to stop the spread of Covid-19, but Swiss slopes are already open. The ski season at Christmas and the New Year is a vital part of the economy for many European countries Mr Castex said it was his duty to protect fellow citizens. "The conclusion you need to make is that 'I'm not going to Switzerland'," he told BFMTV on Wednesday, adding that anyone who did go would face quarantine on their return.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-55157175>

In '76 Days', a Documentary Portrait of Lockdown in Wuhan

"Papa!" screams a hospital worker, covered from head to toe in a Hazmat suit and PPE, in the opening moments of the documentary "76 Days." This is in the early days of the pandemic in Wuhan, back in January and February when the city of 11 million went into a 2 1/2-month lockdown and hospitals were overrun. The health worker's father has just died, and her agony at not being able to sit by his side is overwhelming. Her colleagues restrain her as she sobs, moaning, "Papa, you'll stay forever in my heart."

<https://thediplomat.com/2020/12/in-76-days-a-documentary-portrait-of-lockdown-in-wuhan/>

COVID-19 lockdowns drive spike in online child abuse

Out-of-school kids and adult predators spending more time at home and on the internet during the coronavirus pandemic is the "perfect storm" driving a spike in online child sex abuse around the world, activists and police say. From slums in the Philippines to Australia's suburbs, the cross-border crime has mushroomed as offenders take advantage of school closures and lockdowns to reach children—either in person or via social media, gaming sites and the dark web.

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-12-covid-lockdowns-spike-online-child.html>

Only working age care home residents allowed to leave for visits over Christmas

Only residents of working age should be allowed leave care homes for Christmas, according to Government guidance. An exemption can be made in exceptional circumstances, such as visiting a loved one at the end of their life. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) said the risks are usually significantly greater for older people than for those of working age. The guidance says that residents, their families and care homes should very carefully consider whether making visits out from the home is the best thing to do, or whether a visit at the care home would provide meaningful contact in a safer way.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/christmas-working-age-residents-leave-care-homes-b133568.html>

Joy as Britain's care home residents share first hugs with relatives since March

Residents of Britain's care homes shared their first precious hugs and kisses with relatives since March on Wednesday, after homes were able to give visitors rapid tests for COVID-19 which give results in 30 minutes. Bob Underhill, an 84-year-old retiree, was reunited with his wife Patricia, 82, who has Alzheimer's. Both were overcome as they met, then hugged and kissed through their face masks. "I've only seen her twice since March because they had a shutdown here, and we just had to sit and wait," said Underhill.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain-relatives/joy-as-britains-care-home-residents-share-first-hugs-with-relatives-since-march-idUKKBN28C2HQ>

'Where people come to wait to die': COVID-19 in US nursing homes

Ucedrah Osby heard the terrible news in a way nobody ever wants to: from a local television report, at the same time as everybody else in Bakersfield, California who tuned in. "They were doing interviews," she recalled. "They were saying that the facility had a COVID outbreak." Osby's uncle, Clyde Lee Cooper, 76, lived in Kingston Healthcare Center, the nursing home in question. Over the course of that week in early May as Osby desperately tried to get updates on Cooper's health, coronavirus engulfed the place. Ambulances arrived, wheeling patients away who never returned. To date, 104 residents have contracted COVID-19 in a facility with 184 beds, at least 19 have died of the coronavirus, and dozens of staff members have tested positive.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/12/2/where-people-come-to-wait-to-die-covid-19-in-us-nursing-homes>

Scientific Viewpoint

These Covid-19 Vaccines Are Safe, Right?

Sam Fazeli, a Bloomberg Opinion contributor who covers the pharmaceutical industry for Bloomberg Intelligence, answered questions about the safety of new Covid-19 vaccines that are set to win approval for broad use in the U.S., Europe and elsewhere as early as this month. The conversation has been edited and condensed.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2020-12-02/how-safe-are-covid-19-vaccines-from-pfizer-biontech-moderna-and-astrazeneca>

Covid-19: Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine judged safe for use in UK from next week

The UK has become the first country in the world to approve the Pfizer/BioNTech coronavirus vaccine, paving the way for mass vaccination. Britain's medicines regulator, the MHRA, says the jab,

which offers up to 95% protection against Covid-19 illness, is safe to be rolled out. The first doses are already on their way to the UK, with 800,000 due in the coming days, Pfizer said. Health Secretary Matt Hancock said the NHS will contact people about jabs. Elderly people in care homes and care home staff have been placed top of the priority list, followed by over-80s and health and care staff. But because hospitals already have the facilities to store the vaccine at -70C, as required, the very first vaccinations are likely to take place there - for care home staff, NHS staff and patients - so none of the vaccine is wasted. A further 648 deaths within 28 days of a positive Covid-19 test were recorded in the UK on Wednesday, with another 16,170 cases reported.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-55145696>

U.K. Authorizes Pfizer, BioNTech's Covid-19 Vaccine for Emergency Use

The U.K. became the first Western nation to grant emergency-use authorization for a Covid-19 vaccine, clearing a shot developed by Pfizer Inc. of the U.S. and BioNTech SE of Germany to be distributed in limited numbers within days. The two-shot vaccine is also being reviewed by the Food and Drug Administration in the U.S., where a similar authorization could come later this month and a rollout before the end of the year. The U.K. green light on Wednesday punctuates a monthslong sprint by the two drugmakers, which teamed up earlier this year and then pulled ahead of two other Western pharmaceutical companies, each with its own promising shot. Vaccines typically take years to bring to market.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/pfizer-and-biontechs-covid-19-vaccine-wins-u-k-authorization-11606893360?mod=djemalertNEWS>

Have countries led by women coped better with Covid-19?

Eight months ago, the tooth fairy flitted into New Zealand politics. During a national address, the country's premier Jacinda Ardern declared that, although she was placing the population into a tight lockdown to combat Covid-19, "We do consider both the tooth fairy and the Easter bunny to be essential workers." The video of her speech went viral. Was this just a piece of political theatre? Perhaps. But the humour, care and humanity it showed raise an intriguing question: have female leaders been better at rallying their voters to combat the pandemic than men?

<https://www.ft.com/content/6b597385-ba51-413a-96bd-cb75d3446718>

Beware fake coronavirus vaccines, says Interpol

Interpol has issued a global alert to law enforcement agencies around the world warning them that organised crime networks may try to sell fake Covid-19 vaccines or steal real supplies. The global police coordination agency, based in France, said on Wednesday it had issued an orange alert to police forces in its 194 member states warning them to prepare for vaccines to be targeted both physically and online.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/dec/02/beware-fake-coronavirus-vaccines-says-interpol>

C.D.C. Recommends That Nursing Homes and Health Workers Get Vaccines First

An independent panel advising the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention voted Tuesday to recommend that residents and employees of nursing homes and similar facilities be the first people in the United States to receive coronavirus vaccines, along with health care workers who are especially at risk of being exposed to the virus. The panel, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, voted 13 to 1 during an emergency meeting to make the recommendation. The director of the C.D.C., Dr. Robert R. Redfield, is expected to decide by Wednesday whether to accept it as the agency's formal guidance to states as they prepare to start giving people the shots as soon as two weeks from now.

<https://www.nytimes.com/live/2020/12/01/world/covid-19-coronavirus>

U.K. approves Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for rollout from 'next week'

The U.K. on Wednesday became the first Western country to approve a COVID-19 vaccine for

general use as it announced a rollout of Pfizer-BioNTech's drug from next week. "The government has today accepted the recommendation from the independent Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to approve Pfizer-BioNTech's Covid-19 vaccine for use," the department of health said in a statement. "The vaccine will be made available across the UK from next week," the statement said. Priority groups will include care home residents, health and care staff, the elderly and the clinically extremely vulnerable.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/12/02/world/u-k-approves-pfizer-biontech-corona-vaccine/>

New research: Mass screening finds over 300 asymptomatic cases in Wuhan

The mass testing project took place over two weeks at the end of May - after the city's stringent lockdown was lifted in April. The study found no 'variable' virus in the asymptomatic cases, and the close contacts of these positive asymptomatic cases did not test positive.

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/mass-screening-finds-over-300-asymptomatic-cases-in-wuhan-7075933/>

China 'gives North Korea's Kim Jong-un and family experimental Covid vaccine'

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, his family and several top-ranking officials in his administration have been provided with an experimental coronavirus vaccine by China, an analyst has claimed. "Kim Jong-un and multiple other high-ranking officials within the Kim family and leadership network have been vaccinated for coronavirus within the last two to three weeks thanks to a vaccine candidate supplied by the Chinese government," said Harry Kazianis, a North Korea expert who works at the Washington-based think tank Center for the National Interest. He revealed the information in an article on news outlet 19FortyFive, citing two unidentified Japanese intelligence sources. But the intelligence sources did not reveal the name of the company whose experimental vaccine was administered to the North Korean leader and his officials.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/kim-jong-un-covid-vaccine-china-b1764440.html>

UK becomes first country to approve Pfizer/BioNTech's Covid-19 vaccine, first shots roll out next week

The United Kingdom has become the first Western nation to authorize a Covid-19 vaccine, a landmark moment in the coronavirus pandemic that paves the way for the first doses to be rolled out across the country next week. "Help is on the way," Health Secretary Matt Hancock announced Wednesday morning, after UK regulators granted emergency authorization for a vaccine made by US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech. A final analysis of the Phase 3 trial of the vaccine shows it was 95% effective in preventing infections, even in older adults, and caused no serious safety concerns, Pfizer said last month.

https://edition.cnn.com/2020/12/02/uk/pfizer-coronavirus-vaccine-uk-intl-hnk/index.html?utm_source=twCNNi&utm_term=link&utm_content=2020-12-02T07%3A47%3A14&utm_medium=social

Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine authorised for use in the UK

People in care homes may be first in UK to get authorised Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine The UK government has become the first in the world to give the Pfizer/BioNTech covid-19 vaccine temporary authorisation for emergency use. The UK has pre-ordered 40 million doses - enough for 20 million people at most, as it is a two-shot vaccine - and will start to vaccinate people possibly as early as next week. To distribute the vaccine, Pfizer has designed special cardboard boxes that can be packed with dry ice, enabling the vaccine doses to be kept at -70°C during transport. They can then be stored in a normal fridge for up to five days. This afternoon the Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisations (JCVI) released its advice on who will receive priority for the vaccine. It recommended that priority be given first to care home residents and their carers, then to frontline health and social care workers and people aged 80 and over. People 75 and over will be next, followed by those aged 70 and above and people who are clinically extremely vulnerable. The vaccine will not be given to pregnant women or to most children under 16, because there is no

safety data for these groups.

https://www.newscientist.com/article/2237475-covid-19-news-pfizer-biontech-vaccine-authorised-for-use-in-the-uk/?utm_campaign=echobox&utm_medium=social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1606895487

Coronavirus: UK approves Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, to roll out next week

Britain on Wednesday said it had approved the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for use and that it will be rolled out from next week. "The Government has today accepted the recommendation from the independent Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to approve Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine for use," the government said. "The vaccine will be made available across the UK from next week." The move makes Britain one of the first countries to begin the process of vaccinating its population as it tries to curb the COVID-19 outbreak. Prime Minister Boris Johnson said COVID-19 vaccines will "allow us to reclaim our lives."

<https://www.dw.com/en/coronavirus-uk-approves-pfizer-biontech-vaccine-to-roll-out-next-week/a-55792680>

Researchers determine how the SARS-CoV-2 virus hijacks and rapidly causes damage to human lung cells

In a multi-group collaborative involving the National Emerging Infectious Disease Laboratories (NEIDL), the Center for Regenerative Medicine (CRoM), and the Center for Network Systems Biology (CNSB), scientists have reported the first map of the molecular responses of human lung cells to infection by SARS-CoV-2. By combining bioengineered human alveolar cells with sophisticated, highly precise mass spectrometry technology, Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM) researchers have identified host proteins and pathways in lung cells whose levels change upon infection by the SARS-CoV-2, providing insights into disease pathology and new therapeutic targets to block COVID-19.

<https://phys.org/news/2020-12-sars-cov-virus-hijacks-rapidly-human.html>

Largest Clinical Trial in Africa to Treat COVID-19 Cases is Launched in 13 Countries

African countries and an international network of research institutions, including the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH), have joined forces to launch the largest COVID-19 clinical trial in mild-to-moderate outpatients in Africa. The ANTICOV clinical trial aims to respond to the urgent need to identify treatments that can be used to treat mild and moderate cases of COVID-19 early and prevent spikes in hospitalisation that could overwhelm fragile and already overburdened health systems in Africa.

<https://www.swisstph.ch/en/news/news-detail/news/largest-clinical-trial-in-africa-to-treat-covid-19-cases-is-launched-in-13-countries/>

AstraZeneca U.S. COVID-19 vaccine trial results likely in late-Jan, says health official

AstraZeneca Plc will likely get results of its U.S. COVID-19 vaccine trial in late-January and could potentially file for an emergency authorization, the chief adviser for the U.S. government's Operation Warp Speed program said on Wednesday. The British drugmaker and Oxford University have already published interim efficacy results from their UK trial in November, but the results have raised questions among scientists. The company said the vaccine could be 90% effective when given as a half dose followed by a full dose, based on a relatively small number of volunteers, while overall effectiveness was around 70%. Speaking at a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services meeting, OWS chief adviser Moncef Slaoui said the large set of contrasting data coming out from the UK and Brazil trials may not be enough to ensure the vaccine receives the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's emergency use authorization.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/instant-article/idUKKBN28C33U>

Medical journal editorial refutes WHO finding on Gilead's remdesivir for COVID-19

An editorial in the influential New England Journal of Medicine cites problems with a World Health Organization (WHO) study that found Gilead Sciences Inc's antiviral remdesivir failed to improve

COVID-19 survival, and said it does not refute trials that demonstrated benefits of the drug in treating the illness. The editorial, by David Harrington at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, infectious disease specialist Dr. Lindsey Baden and Brown University biostatistician Joseph Hogan, was published on Wednesday along with the WHO study. They noted that the trial called Solidarity, which looked at four drugs, was conducted in 30 countries ranging from Switzerland and Germany to Iran and Kenya, leading to inconsistencies in the data collected.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-gilead-remdesivir/medical-journal-editorial-refutes-who-finding-on-gileads-remdesivir-for-covid-19-idUKKBN28C3EX>

COVID-19 Vaccines Make Some Health Care Workers Wary : Shots - Health News

Health care workers are expected to be first in line to be offered a COVID-19 vaccine when one is available. It makes sense: Getting a safe, effective vaccine would help keep them and their patients healthy. Seeing doctors, nurses and medical aides getting COVID-19 vaccines would also set an example for the community. But the speed of COVID-19 vaccine development, along with concerns about political interference with the process, has left some health care workers on the fence about COVID-19 vaccines. So many health care workers are expressing concerns and anxiety about getting COVID-19 vaccines that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says addressing hesitancy in this group is a top priority. A CDC survey, shared at a public meeting of its vaccine advisory committee on Nov. 23, found that 63% of health care workers polled in recent months said they would get a COVID-19 vaccine.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/12/01/940158684/some-health-care-workers-are-wary-of-getting-covid-19-vaccines>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Arizona hospitals scramble to boost staffing as state's COVID-19 crisis deepens

A shortage of medical providers could exacerbate Arizona's growing COVID-19 crisis, as hospitals compete for contract labor in the midst of a pandemic that is gripping the entire United States. Arizona hospital officials are most worried about finding enough staff — not PPE or beds — to treat a surge of new COVID-19 patients. "The number one limiting factor is staffing right now," said Ann-Marie Alameddin, president and CEO of the Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association. "It's a much tighter supply because the whole country is in need of the same skill set." What's happening with COVID-19 in Arizona in this latest second wave of infection is a different situation than the summer.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/local/arizona-health/2020/12/02/arizona-hospitals-struggle-find-staff-during-second-covid-19-surge/6423782002/>

Coronavirus hospital deaths soar by 465 with healthy 19-year-old among victims

On the day that the national lockdown was replaced with a tier system, approval was given to the Pfizer/BioNTech coronavirus vaccine, which can now be rolled out across the country

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/breaking-coronavirus-hospitals-deaths-soar-23104243>

Italy tightens antivirus restrictions for Christmas

Italy will have to adopt strict restrictions over Christmas holidays to avoid a third wave of the pandemic next year, Health Minister Roberto Speranza told parliament on Wednesday. The new rules -- which will be effective from Dec. 4 -- will include an almost total ban on international movements and between Italian regions, aimed at avoiding the spread of the virus across the country and limiting huge get-togethers. The restriction will be even tougher on Dec. 25-26 and Jan. 1, when citizens would not be allowed to travel even between cities. A nationwide curfew at 10 p.m. will be maintained also on Christmas night and New Year's Eve, likely obliging Italian churches to anticipate the traditional midnight mass. The government is still discussing a few exceptions to these limitations, possibly for students who plan to visit their families in a different region, or elderly parents and grandparents who live alone and would spend the holidays by themselves.

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/italy-tightens-antivirus-restrictions-for-christmas/2063072>

Germany is now seeing MORE Covid-19 infections than Britain and reports its highest number of deaths yet after its 'lockdown light' failed to reduce number of cases

Germany is seeing around 18,000 infections per day, next to 15,000 in Britain. Contagion has remained high despite a month-long 'lockdown light' in Germany. Germany's death rate has also reached record levels with new high of 487 today.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9009733/Germany-seeing-Covid-19-infections-Britain.html>

To slow down a killer virus, Spain breaks with decades-old Christmas traditions

For 41 years, families in the Spanish capital have kicked off the Christmas season by gathering behind the department store El Corte Inglés to watch a performance by giant singing puppets. The store's "Cortylandia" show has treated crowds in the past to festive depictions of "Gulliver's Travels" and "Aladdin," among numerous others, including the Noah's ark story. But this year, as all the world battles a killer virus, the tradition has been replaced with a light display that simply reads, in lowercase letters, felices fiestas. Happy holidays. The loss of a beloved 15-minute puppet show is among the Christmastime traditions of this traditionally Catholic country being altered or even eliminated, as the government tries to keep its physically demonstrative populace a step ahead of a virus that has killed 45,069 to date in the country.

<https://www.marketwatch.com/story/to-slow-down-a-killer-virus-spain-breaks-with-decades-old-christmas-traditions-1606847541>

New COVID-19 cases in France stay below 10,000 for third day

New COVID-19 infections in France stayed below 10,000 for the third day in a row on Tuesday, a sequence unseen since mid-September, and the number of people hospitalised for the disease resumed a downward trend. The government has loosened its second national coronavirus lockdown, put in place on Oct. 30, by allowing all shops to reopen at the weekend. President Emmanuel Macron said last week the lockdown could be lifted on Dec. 15 if by then the number of new infections per day fell to 5,000 and the number of COVID-19 patients in intensive care declined to between 2,500 and 3,000. Earlier in the day, Macron said that France should be in a position to embark on a broader COVID-19 vaccination campaign between April and June next year, after initially targeting a smaller group of people.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-france-infections/new-covid-19-cases-in-france-stay-below-10000-for-third-day-idUSKBN28B64Y>

Zimbabwe tightens gathering limits as COVID-19 cases rise

Political analyst Rashweat Mukundu said the increase "points to [a] notable failure in government's COVID-19 response and also the mishandling of the opening up of the socioeconomic sector". Mukundu cited the reopening of schools last month "without adequate precautionary measures" as one of the reasons behind what he described as a "ticking time bomb". "The government's response has largely been politicised," Mukundu said, urging authorities "to go back to the drawing board".

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/2/zimbabwe-tightens-gathering-limits-covid-19-cases-rise>

Florida becomes the third state to reach one million COVID-19 cases after Texas and California - and Governor DeSantis STILL refuses to order a lockdown

Florida Department of Health released new COVID-19 figures on Tuesday. Total statewide tally of COVID-19 cases has reached 1,008,166, DOH data shows. Of those, 18,679 Floridians have died of the disease caused by the coronavirus. Governor Ron DeSantis, a Republican, has refused calls for strict lockdown. DeSantis slammed those who urged school closures, calling them 'flat-earthers.' Last week, he barred towns from fining people for violating mitigation measures.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9007193/Florida-state-reach-one-million-COVID-19-cases-Texas-California.html>

New Lockdown

Covid-19: Shoppers return to stores under England's new tier system

Shoppers have returned to the High Street in England, after non-essential retailers opened their doors at the end of a four-week national lockdown. A three-tiered system of Covid-19 rules has now come into force in the nation, with gyms and businesses such as hairdressers also able to open. More than 55 million people are in the strictest two tiers and cannot mix indoors with those in other households. The government said it would "safeguard the gains made during the past month". At a Downing Street briefing, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said he accepted that the tiered system was "tough", but insisted that regional restrictions and mass testing were the way to "keep the virus under control".

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55153899>

Spreading virus pushes German regions towards tougher lockdowns

Germany inched towards tougher lockdown measures on Wednesday, with one regional premier promising a stricter course now that regions that had been spared the worst of the coronavirus pandemic are seeing case numbers surge. A partial lockdown that was imposed at the start of November was last week extended into December, and state and federal leaders are expected to discuss a further prolongation into January at a video conference due on Wednesday afternoon. More than 17,000 new cases were reported overnight, and 487 deaths - a new daily record.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-germany/spreading-virus-pushes-german-regions-towards-tougher-lockdowns-idUSL8N2I1Z8>

Coronavirus: England's national lockdown ends, as country moves into new tier system

England's second national lockdown has come to an end, with the country moving into a new tiered system of coronavirus restrictions. As the clock struck one minute past midnight on Wednesday, nationwide restrictions expired and were replaced by a controversial, localised approach as the government attempts to further stem the spread of Covid-19. Around 99 per cent of the population are now under the toughest two levels of restrictions, tier 2 and tier 3, with only three areas in England - the Isle of Wight, Cornwall, and the Isles of Scilly - in the lowest tier 1 level. In the highest tier - which currently includes the cities of Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol and Newcastle - pubs and restaurants will only be able to offer takeaway and delivery services.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/england-lockdown-end-tier-system-b1764839.html>

Coronavirus tier system comes into force as England's national lockdown is lifted

A new tougher tier system of Covid-19 restrictions for England has come into force, as the national four-week lockdown is lifted. The measures, which came into force at midnight, were approved by MPs in the Commons on Tuesday with the support of 291 votes to 78. More than 55 million people in the country are being placed in the top two strictest tiers, with London in Tier 2. The rules are tougher than in the previous tier system England was facing before its second lockdown began in November.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/covid-tier-system-comes-into-force-lockdown-ends-b133503.html>