

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

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Lockdown Exit

Pfizer's Covid-19 Vaccine Protected Kids During Omicron, CDC Study Finds

The Covid-19 vaccine from Pfizer Inc. and partner BioNTech SE was highly effective at reducing the risk of severe disease in children 17 years and younger during the Omicron surge but didn't work as well at preventing infection, according to a new government study. The two-dose vaccine reduced the risk of Covid-19 hospitalization in children 5 to 11 years by 74% and by 92% or higher in children 12 to 17, according to the study published Tuesday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. However, the vaccine was 51% effective at reducing the risk of infection among 5- to 11-year-olds, while Omicron was predominant, and between 34% and 45% effective in children 12 to 17 years, depending on the age, for the first five months after the second dose, according to the study. The vaccine was 90.7% effective at preventing symptomatic disease in the pivotal study that led to authorization. That study was conducted before Omicron emerged.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/pfizers-covid-19-vaccine-protected-kids-during-omicron-cdc-study-finds-11646173594>

DOH to shift to weekly COVID-19 case updates

The Department of Health (DOH) will forego the daily release of COVID-19 case updates, Communications Secretary Martin Andanar said in a report aired on Tuesday. "Babaguhin din po natin ang COVID-19 public reporting at gagawing weekly na," he added. [Translation: We will change the COVID-19 public reporting to weekly reports.] DOH Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire, in an earlier meeting with media editors, said the agency's daily case bulletins will continue only until this week. It will then be posted every Monday starting March 7.

<https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2022/3/1/DOH-COVID-19-case-bulletin-release.html>

Here's how to cope with anxiety as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted across Canada

Learning to live with COVID-19 is a message that's been repeated by provincial and territorial leaders across the country. But learning to live with the virus isn't that simple for millions of Canadians whose medical condition or age has increased their risk of developing complications from a COVID-19 infection. As provinces and territories lift pandemic restrictions such as mask mandates and vaccine passport programs, society's most vulnerable are being forced to assess their risk tolerance. "For some people — immunocompromised or the frail elderly, for example — it might be quite dangerous for them to get COVID. We shouldn't be cavalier," Dr. Steven Taylor, a clinical psychologist and professor in the department of psychiatry at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, told Dr. Brian Goldman, host of CBC podcast The Dose.

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/whitecoat/here-s-how-to-cope-with-anxiety-as-covid-19-restrictions-are-lifted-across-canada-1.6362112>

California, Oregon, Washington to drop school mask mandates

Schoolchildren in California, Oregon and Washington will no longer be required to wear masks as part of new indoor mask policies the Democratic governors of all three states announced jointly on Monday. "With declining case rates and hospitalizations across the West, California, Oregon and Washington are moving together to update their masking guidance," the governors said in a statement. There are more than 7.5 million school-age children across the three states, which have had some of the strictest coronavirus safety measures during the pandemic. The new guidance will make face coverings strongly recommended rather than a requirement at most indoor places in

California starting Tuesday and at schools on March 12, regardless of vaccination status.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-technology-health-california-public-health-c0be203235ff50532167173623e56b59>

Demand for Science Lab Buildings Soars During Covid-19 Pandemic

The rapid growth of life-science research during the pandemic is triggering a record boom in the development of new lab space and offices serving these companies. Development of buildings geared toward biotechnology, pharmaceutical and other laboratory firms was already on the rise before 2020. But demand for this space intensified as billions of dollars poured into research and development of a Covid-19 vaccine and other therapies for the virus. Life-science space has also been enjoying high occupancy rates because—unlike traditional office buildings—much of the lab work requires specialized equipment and building infrastructure that cannot be easily replicated at home.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/demand-for-science-lab-buildings-soars-during-covid-19-pandemic-11646139601>

Exit Strategies

63M Filipinos fully immunized vs COVID-19 a year into vaccine drive

More than 63 million Filipinos have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 a year since the government began its immunization program, the Department of Health said Tuesday. In a briefing, Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said more than 135 million vaccine doses have been administered as of February 28.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2022/03/01/2164206/63m-filipinos-fully-immunized-vs-covid-19-year-vaccine-drive>

More mask mandates fall as poor COVID vaccine protection noted in young kids

New York City schools will lose the masks this week, and the city's vaccine requirements for restaurants, gyms, and movie theaters will likely expire next week and not be reinstated, according to the New York Times, as new not-peer-reviewed data show poor COVID-19 vaccine protection in kids 5 to 11 years old.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/02/more-mask-mandates-fall-poor-covid-vaccine-protection-noted-young-kids>

Dubai entry requirements: Travel restrictions ease in UAE with Covid tests scrapped for fully vaccinated

Fully vaccinated travellers will no longer be required to present a negative PCR test upon arrival in Dubai after the country eased its Covid entry rules over the weekend. Unvaccinated travellers will be able to enter either with a negative PCR test result taken within 48 hours before arrival or with proof of recovery from Covid within the past month.

<https://inews.co.uk/inews-lifestyle/travel/dubai-entry-requirements-travel-restrictions-uae-ease-covid-tests-scrapped-fully-vaccinated-1488272>

Hong Kong elderly left it late for Covid shots, families fear time running out

In Hong Kong, the worsening fifth wave, which first hit the city in late December, has affected homes for the elderly badly, with confirmed cases in 580 facilities and 2,900 residents and 865 staff infected, according to health authorities. The vaccination rate among the elderly remains relatively low compared with other age groups. Just over 30 per cent of those aged 80 and above have received two doses of a coronavirus vaccine.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/article/3168737/coronavirus-hong-kongs-elderly-left-it-late-get-covid-19-shots-now-worried>

Italy entry requirements: Travel restrictions ease as Covid tests scrapped for fully vaccinated arrivals

Fully vaccinated travellers arriving in Italy will no longer need to provide proof of a negative Covid test from Tuesday. From 1 March, Italy is easing entry restrictions for all arrivals from non-EU countries, including the UK. The country will accept proof of vaccination, recovery or a negative Covid test result for entry.

<https://inews.co.uk/inews-lifestyle/travel/italy-entry-requirements-travel-restrictions-covid-tests-scrapped-fully-vaccinated-1488883>

Covid: Medics concerned at vulnerable child low vaccine rate

Doctors have expressed concern over the low number of 5 to 11-year-olds, classed as vulnerable or living with a vulnerable person, getting vaccinated. The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) serving Wiltshire, Swindon and Bath said only 4.7%, or 250 out of 5,300 eligible children, have been vaccinated after being sent an invitation.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-wiltshire-60561369>

1 million Sputnik coronavirus vaccines expire in Guatemala

Health authorities in Guatemala say over a million doses of the Russian Sputnik coronavirus vaccine have expired, because nobody wanted to take the shot. Francisco Coma, the country's health minister, said Monday that there was a "rejection" among the population toward the vaccine, even though a lot of Guatemalans remain unvaccinated.

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/million-sputnik-coronavirus-vaccines-expire-guatemala-83172337>

Hong Kong's Covid-19 Measures Pressure Finance in Asian Financial Hub

Hong Kong's most recent measures to combat Covid-19 are unsettling its large community of bankers and investors, many of whom were already struggling to square business and family commitments with severely curtailed travel. Some financial professionals have asked employers whether they can relocate, while a few expatriates have decided in recent months to resign and move home. Others are considering options that could split up their families for months or more as they try to move their children into more stable schooling and away from the risk of mandatory quarantine.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/hong-kongs-covid-19-measures-pressure-finance-in-asian-financial-hub-11646130602>

Indonesia extends AstraZeneca vaccine shelf life as 6 mln doses near expiry

Indonesia has extended the shelf life of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine to nine months, as nearly six million doses it received in donations approached their expiration dates, a health ministry spokesperson told Reuters. The decision underscores the challenges many developing countries face in their slow inoculation campaigns, as vaccines donated by wealthy countries arrive with a relatively short shelf life of just a few months or weeks

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/exclusive-indonesia-extends-astrazeneca-vaccine-shelf-life-6-mln-doses-near-2022-03-01/>

U.S. to extend international minimum flight requirement waivers over COVID

The US government proposed extending temporary waivers of international minimum flight requirements at some US airports through late October due to COVID-19. Airlines can lose their slots at some congested airports if they do not use them at least 80% of the time. The waivers have been in place since the pandemic began in March 2020. International passenger air travel in 2021 was down 46% to 61 million over 2019 levels, but up over the 34 million international air passengers in 2020.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-extend-international-minimum-flight-requirement-waivers-over-covid-2022-02-28/>

U.S. parents still divided over school COVID masking rules -survey

As public schools around the United States lift COVID-19 mask mandates, parents are divided over

the issue, with nearly 43% saying face covering requirements should remain in place to prevent virus transmission, according to a survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF). Most parents who responded also expressed concern about the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines for children under age 5, saying they do not have enough information, according to the KFF survey of 1,502 adults conducted between Feb. 9 and 21.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-parents-still-divided-over-school-covid-masking-rules-survey-2022-03-01/>

Partisan Exits

Tackling vaccine hesitancy by targeting 'fence-sitters'

A new study, published in the Journal of Community Health, emphasizes the importance of outreach to people who have mixed feelings about getting vaccinated. The study looked at the attitudes of participants aged 55 years and older about vaccines at different stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers accessed data from the COVID-19 Coping Study to identify people in the United States who were either receptive, ambivalent, or against getting vaccinated against the disease.

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/vaccine-hesitancy-convincing-the-ambivalent-may-be-key>

Covid-19: Incomplete lists of vulnerable patients left many unprotected, desperate, and afraid

Up-to-date registers of clinically vulnerable patients must be created to ensure that those who are most at risk during covid-19 and any future pandemics are protected and can access the support they need, a report from the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Vulnerable Groups to Pandemics has recommended. The report considered vulnerable people's experiences during the pandemic and makes 16 recommendations on what the government and the health service can do better to plan and prioritise extremely vulnerable patients during further covid-19 outbreaks and future pandemics. These tackle the format and content of information and guidance; access to medical services such as mental health support to help people deal with anxiety, fear, and isolation; provision of practical support such as food and finance when isolating; and the need for more research into how medical conditions make people more vulnerable to a threat and vaccines less protective.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/376/bmj.o528>

More than £600,000 in Covid-19 fines served to London's businesses

More than £600,000 in Covid-19 fines have been dished to London's businesses by local authorities wielding the emergency powers, an Evening Standard investigation has revealed. Police forces have faced the brunt of the scrutiny over coronavirus powers being used to break up illicit parties and enforce the lockdown rules, while Scotland Yard is currently deciding whether to hand out fines for the Partygate scandal at Downing Street. However little attention has been paid to how local authorities – also permitted to issue fines and bring prosecutions under the Covid laws – have used their powers. Freedom of Information requests reveal councils around the capital have handed out at least £600,000 in fines since the pandemic began, while a further £24,000 in fines have been imposed after full criminal prosecutions brought by six councils – Greenwich, Waltham Forest, Ealing, Haringey, Bexley, and Tower Hamlets.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/covid-fines-london-business-evening-standard-investigation-b985133.html>

Scientific Viewpoint

COVID-19 patent challenges mount as Moderna faces new vaccine lawsuit

A lawsuit filed Monday by Arbutus Biopharma Corp against Moderna Inc is the latest in a small but growing list of high-stakes patent disputes over COVID-19 vaccines and treatments. Arbutus and its partner Genevant Sciences GmbH told a Delaware federal court that Moderna misused its technology for delivering mRNA, which it said allowed Moderna to develop its COVID-19 vaccine at "record speed." The case is not the first patent dispute over COVID-19 breakthroughs, or even the

first between Arbutus and Moderna.

<https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/covid-19-patent-challenges-mount-moderna-faces-new-vaccine-lawsuit-2022-02-28/>

Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine effectiveness fell quickly for kids during Omicron surge but still offered some protection against severe disease

The effectiveness of the Pfizer/BioNTech Covid-19 vaccines for children waned quickly during the Omicron surge, especially among children ages 5 to 11, but was still protective against severe disease, according to new data from the New York State Department of Health. Within one month of being fully vaccinated, effectiveness of the Pfizer shots against infection caused by the Omicron variant fell from 68% to just 12% in the youngest children eligible to get the shots: those 5 to 11 years old.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2022/02/28/health/pfizer-vaccine-effectiveness-kids-omicron/index.html>

Valneva wins first COVID-19 vaccine approval

French-Austrian biotech firm Valneva on Tuesday said its COVID-19 vaccine received emergency authorisation for use in Bahrain, the first approval for its jab. Valneva committed to supplying the Gulf kingdom with one million doses in an advance purchase agreement last year and plans to deliver the first batches at the end of March. The jab, which uses the traditional technology of inactivated virus, "will offer an alternative vaccine to the Bahraini population and medical community", said Valneva president Thomas Lingelbach. Bahrain has reported more than 1,400 COVID-related deaths and cases exceed 500,000. More than 70 percent of the population has received at least one vaccine dose.

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-03-valneva-covid-vaccine.html>

COVID-19: Pfizer vaccine less effective at preventing infection in younger than in older children, study suggests

A study suggests Pfizer jabs in children aged five to 11 were less effective at preventing infection than in children aged 12 to 17. The New York State researchers' study shows that during the recent Omicron surge, efficacy against infection among five to 11 year olds who had received Pfizer fell 56% from 68% to 12% while those aged 12-17 only fell 15%. However the study also shows that during the surge, between mid-December and the end of January, the Pfizer jab was protective against severe disease in children aged five to 11.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-pfizer-vaccine-less-effective-at-preventing-infection-in-younger-than-in-older-children-study-suggests-12554702>

Effectiveness of Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines in preventing severe SARS-CoV-2 infection

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic led to severe infections and deaths of millions of people worldwide. Initially, non-pharmaceutical measures were used extensively to reduce illness and death. Vaccines were introduced to the treatment resources of the European Union in December 2020. Results from phase 3 and phase 4 clinical trials and the impact of vaccines on older individuals in real-world settings showed high effectiveness. The vaccines that have been authorized for administration in the European Union include Pfizer-BioNTech (BNT162b2), Janssen, Oxford-AstraZeneca (hAdOx1-S-AZD1222), and Moderna (mRNA-1273). Spain is known to report the world's highest rates of illness and death from COVID-19, especially in the Aragon region. Oxford-AstraZeneca, Moderna, and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines were widely implemented in Spain and Aragon. Janssen vaccine was added to the vaccination program later

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20220301/Effectiveness-of-Pfizer-BioNTech-Moderna-and-Oxford-AstraZeneca-COVID-19-vaccines-in-preventing-severe-SARS-CoV-2-infection.aspx>

COVID-19 vaccine doesn't affect IVF success rates - Israeli study

The mRNA coronavirus vaccines have no negative effect on frozen-thawed embryo transfer, which is the core practice of IVF (In-Vitro Fertilization), according to a study from Israel's Sheba Medical Center published in the peer-reviewed medical journal Fertility and Sterility on Thursday. Researchers analyzed 672 embryo transfers among a cohort of 428 women up to the age of 38 who had undergone IVF treatment - including 141 that were either vaccinated with two mRNA coronavirus vaccines or recovered from the virus. The researchers ultimately found no difference in the rate of pregnancy between the vaccinated and unvaccinated test groups.

<https://www.jpost.com/health-and-wellness/coronavirus/article-698955>

Possible case of deer-to human Covid infection identified in Canada

Canadian researchers believe they have found the first-ever instance of a deer passing the coronavirus to a human, warning that broader surveillance of wildlife is needed to prevent further mutations from developing and spreading undetected. In a paper published last week, but not yet peer reviewed, scientists say at least one case of Covid-19 in humans can be traced to a strain of the virus found in hunted deer. Biologists have previously found white tail deer populations infected with Covid in northeastern regions of the United States, as well as central provinces of Canada. While deer aren't typically seen as a species that can easily pass on the virus to humans, experts had nonetheless speculated that transmission was possible.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/28/deer-human-covid-transmission-possible-canada>

Covid-19: Sanofi and GSK to seek regulatory authorisation for protein based vaccine

Sanofi and GlaxoSmithKline's covid-19 vaccine has 57.9% (95% confidence interval 26.5% to 76.7%) efficacy against any symptomatic disease, the companies have reported. In a phase 3 trial in which more than 10 000 adults were randomised to receive two doses of the vaccine or placebo, 21 days apart, researchers found it to have 100% efficacy against severe disease and hospital admission (0 v 10 cases in placebo group after one dose, 0 v 4 cases after two doses) and 75% efficacy against moderate or severe disease (3 v 11 cases). Early data has also indicated 77% efficacy against any symptomatic disease associated with the delta variant, French drug company Sanofi has said. So far, details of the trial have been released only through press release, although the companies said full study results will be published later this year.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/376/bmj.o526>

Fears of medical shortages and disease in Ukraine after Russian invasion

Ukraine is running low on critical medical supplies and has had to halt urgent efforts to curb a polio outbreak since Russia invaded the country last week, public health experts say. Medical needs are already acute, with the World Health Organization warning on Sunday that oxygen supplies were running out. read more On Tuesday, WHO told a briefing that some facilities already had no oxygen left. Fears of a wider public health crisis are growing as people flee their homes, health services are interrupted and supplies fail to reach Ukraine, which has also been hit by the COVID-19 pandemic

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/fears-medical-shortages-disease-ukraine-after-russian-invasion-2022-03-01/>

Arbutus files patent infringement lawsuit against Moderna related to COVID shot

Arbutus Biopharma Corp said on Monday it had filed a lawsuit against Moderna Inc seeking damages for infringement of U.S. patents related to Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine. Shares of Arbutus rose 11% in early trading, while Moderna fell 2.5% on the lawsuit that comes after a federal appeals court in December rejected Moderna's challenge to Arbutus' patents. Arbutus said it developed the so-called lipid nanoparticles (LNP) that enclose genetic materials known as messenger RNA or mRNA, the patents related to which were licensed to Genevant Sciences, a joint venture between Arbutus and Roivant Sciences Ltd

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/arbutus-files-patent-infringement-lawsuit-against-moderna-2022-02-28/>

Modified T cells may help those on immunosuppressants; ECMO machines improve COVID survival

The following is a summary of some recent studies on COVID-19. They include research that warrants further study to corroborate the findings and that has yet to be certified by peer review. Modified T cells not curbed by immunosuppressants. A technique for modifying virus-attacking T cells might help defend against COVID-19 in patients who must take drugs that suppress the immune system, preliminary findings suggest. Transplant patients, for example, are particularly vulnerable because of the medicines they take to prevent rejection of the new organ

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/modified-t-cells-may-help-those-immunosuppressants-ecmo-machines-improve-covid-2022-02-28/>

Bahrain approves Valneva's COVID vaccine for emergency use

Bahrain has granted emergency use authorisation to the COVID-19 vaccine developed by France's Valneva, the company said in a statement on Tuesday. Valneva expects to deliver the first shipments of its VLA2001 vaccine to the kingdom at the end of March, after it signed an advance purchase deal for one million doses in December last year. "As the only dual-adjuvanted, inactivated COVID-19 vaccine approved in Bahrain, VLA2001 will provide a differentiated vaccine option to the Bahraini population and medical community," said CEO Thomas Lingelbach.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/bahrain-approves-valnevas-covid-vaccine-emergency-use-2022-03-01/>

Novavax expects to apply for full approval of COVID vaccine in H2

Novavax Inc said it would pursue full approval of its COVID-19 vaccine in the second half of this year and forecast total revenue of between \$4 billion and \$5 billion for 2022. "We expect to gain additional authorizations where we have already filed, including in the U.S. We will pursue full approval of our vaccine including filing our BLA (biologics license application), in the second half of 2022," Chief Executive Officer Stanley Erck said during a post-earnings call. Novavax late last month filed for emergency use authorization of the shot in U.S. adults, a much-awaited step following months of struggles with development and manufacturing problems.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/novavaxs-covid-vaccine-shows-long-term-efficacy-uk-trial-2022-02-28/>

Study: 90% of young ECMO-eligible COVID patients at a US hospital died amid rationing

Nearly 90% of adult COVID-19 patients who were eligible for—but didn't receive—extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) during the height of the pandemic died in the hospital owing to a lack of resources, even though they were young and had few underlying health issues, according to a natural experiment published late last week in the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/02/study-90-young-ecmo-eligible-covid-patients-us-hospital-died-amid-rationing>

COPD Foundation links arms with Ena on antiviral nasal spray ahead of phase 2 trials in COVID-19, flu

The COPD Foundation has stepped up to support the development of Ena Respiratory's antiviral nasal spray for use in people with chronic lung diseases. Ena is preparing to run phase 2 studies to test the ability of the nasal spray to prevent COVID-19 and influenza. Australia-based Ena raised around \$24 million last summer, setting it up to run a phase 1 trial of TLR2/6 agonist INNA-051. By delivering the molecule to the nose, Ena aims to help people fight off viruses such as SARS-CoV-2 and influenza by upregulating innate immune responses in their airway epithelial cells. That mechanism of action put INNA-051 on the radar of the not-for-profit COPD Foundation.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/clinical-data/copd-foundation-links-arms-ena-antiviral-nasal-spray-ahead-phase-2-trial>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Covid-19 update: Nearly 20000 community cases, 373 in hospital, 9 in ICU

There are 19,566 new cases of Covid-19 in the community today, the Ministry of Health has reported. It said there were also 373 cases in hospital and nine in ICU. The new community cases today were in Northland (329), Auckland (12,530), Waikato (1812), Bay of Plenty (1185), Lakes (376), Hawke's Bay (168), MidCentral (260), Whanganui (45), Taranaki (165), Tairāwhiti (88), Wairarapa (42), Capital and Coast (691), Hutt Valley (355), Nelson Marlborough (196), Canterbury (740), South Canterbury (37), Southern (529), West Coast (17) and one case is unknown. There were 22 cases identified at the border.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/462513/covid-19-update-nearly-20-000-community-cases-373-in-hospital-9-in-icu>

Australian prime minister diagnosed with COVID-19

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he tested positive for COVID-19 on Tuesday but will continue his official duties while isolating. "I am experiencing flu-like symptoms and will be recovering over the next week," Morrison said in a statement. He said would continue working as prime minister, focusing on the government's responses to the Ukraine war and devastating floods on Australia's east coast. He is isolating in his official Sydney residence. Morrison held a news conference with Defense Minister Peter Dutton earlier Tuesday in which the government promised \$50 million in missiles, ammunition and other military hardware for Ukraine.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/scott-morrison-australian-covid-canberra-peter-dutton-b2025793.html>

Brunei's daily COVID-19 cases top 4000 for two consecutive days

Brunei reported 4,220 new COVID-19 cases on Tuesday, another record daily high, bringing the national tally to 67,762. As a country of 420,000 people, Brunei saw its daily cases exceeding the 4,000 mark for two straight days, after recording more than 3,000 cases for six straight days since last Tuesday. The newly recorded cases were all local infections, the country's health ministry said. The ministry said earlier that the country is going through the third wave of COVID-19 and the number of cases is expected to increase beyond the total reported during the second wave, with the Omicron variant replacing the Delta variant as the dominant variant.

<http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/asiapacific/20220301/c2928e2cec6a466a9152bd026207b84a/c.html>

Hong Kong mortuaries hit capacity as Covid-19 deaths climb

Facilities for storing dead bodies at hospitals and public mortuaries in Hong Kong are at maximum capacity due to a record number of Covid-19 fatalities, the Hospital Authority said on Monday, as officials battle to control a surge in cases. The global financial hub reported a daily record high of 34,466 new coronavirus infections and 87 deaths on Monday, health authorities said. Separately, the city's Education Secretary said international schools could maintain their original term dates, after widespread confusion over summer school holidays.

<https://www.cnbc.com/2022/03/01/hong-kong-mortuaries-hit-capacity-as-covid-19-deaths-climb.html>

Hong Kong reports 32597 new COVID cases on Tuesday

Hong Kong health authorities reported 32,597 new COVID-19 cases on Tuesday and a record 117 deaths in the past 24 hours, as the global financial hub prepared for mandatory testing and a lockdown.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/hong-kong-reports-32597-new-covid-cases-tuesday-2022-03-01/>

New Lockdown

Hong Kong leader calls for calm, after supermarkets emptied ahead of mass COVID

testing

Hong Kong's leader Carrie Lam called for calm on Tuesday after residents emptied supermarkets, stocking up on produce ahead of reports of compulsory mass COVID-19 testing and rumours of a city-wide lockdown. Local media reported compulsory COVID testing would start after March 17, sparking concerns many people will be forced to isolate and families with members testing positive would be separated. Lam appealed to the public "not to fall prey to rumours to avoid unnecessary fears being stirred," with the supply of food and goods remaining normal, according to a statement on Tuesday.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/hong-kong-leader-calls-calm-after-supermarkets-emptied-ahead-mass-covid-testing-2022-03-01/>

Hong Kong residents empty supermarkets ahead of city-wide lockdown

Hong Kong residents braced for a city-wide lockdown, emptying supermarkets and pharmacies, even as leader Carrie Lam called for calm on Tuesday and appealed for the public not to worry over a compulsory mass COVID-19 testing plan. The Chinese-ruled territory reported 32,597 new coronavirus infections on Tuesday and a record 117 deaths in the past 24 hours. It has seen daily infections surge over 30 times from just over 100 at the start of February. The global financial hub has reported more than 230,000 coronavirus infections and more than 800 deaths since the pandemic began in 2020. Around 500 deaths have been in the past week, with the majority being unvaccinated residents.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/hong-kong-residents-brace-citywide-lockdown-leader-calls-calm-2022-03-01/>