

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

7th Mar 2022

Lockdown Exit

Covid Reality Arrives For Kiwis as 'Fortress New Zealand' Falls

Two years after the pandemic began, New Zealanders are finally facing its reality. After keeping the virus at bay for so long, Covid-19 is now tearing through the nation's population courtesy of the highly infectious omicron variant. In the space of two weeks, new case numbers exploded from less than 1,000 a day to more than 22,000. "Psychologically it's quite a big shock because to date the pandemic has been largely something that's happened to other people," said Michael Baker, Professor of Public Health at the University of Otago. "Until recently, the only people I knew who got infected with the virus lived overseas."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-06/covid-reality-arrives-for-kiwis-as-fortress-new-zealand-falls>

Hong Kong residents urged not to panic ahead of COVID mass testing

Hong Kong reported 31,008 new COVID-19 cases and 153 deaths on Sunday as the city's chief secretary said residents should not worry about a looming mass testing scheme, with details to be announced and authorities ensuring a steady supply of food.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/hong-kong-residents-urged-not-panic-ahead-covid-mass-testing-2022-03-06/>

U.S. waives COVID test for Americans leaving Russia, Belarus

The United States is waiving a requirement for negative COVID-19 tests from Americans leaving Belarus or Russia to travel home, the State Department said on Thursday. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said it would exercise its discretion to allow travel by U.S. citizens, permanent residents and holders of valid immigrant visas who were in either country by a Feb. 28 cut-off date.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/us-waives-covid-test-americans-leaving-russia-belarus-2022-03-04/>

Hong Kong's Distress Signals Are Rising

With some kind of lockdown and grim isolation centers looming, the city shows signs of trauma. Two years into the pandemic and counting, the biggest toll may be psychological.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2022-03-05/hong-kong-s-distress-signals-are-rising-as-covid-measures-ramp-up-again>

Death Toll Nears 6 Million as Pandemic Enters Its 3rd Year

The official global death toll from COVID-19 is on the verge of eclipsing 6 million — underscoring that the pandemic, now entering its third year, is far from over. The milestone is the latest tragic reminder of the unrelenting nature of the pandemic even as people are shedding masks, travel is resuming and businesses are reopening around the globe. The death toll, compiled by Johns Hopkins University, stood at 5,997,994 as of Sunday afternoon. Remote Pacific islands, whose isolation had protected them for more than two years, are just now grappling with their first outbreaks and deaths, fueled by the highly contagious omicron variant.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-06/death-toll-nears-6-million-as-pandemic-enters-its-3rd-year>

China's Own mRNA Vaccine Isn't Its Best Bet After Zero Covid

China's zero-Covid policy initially provided a shield from viral infection and an example of disciplined

pandemic management. It's now become a trap from which Beijing is trying to escape without provoking a major health crisis. But being stuck on a home-grown solution is likely to lead to more problems, as Bloomberg Opinion's Therese Raphael and Bloomberg Intelligence pharmaceutical analyst Sam Fazeli discuss here.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2022-03-06/china-s-own-mrna-vaccine-isn-t-its-best-bet-after-zero-covid>

Bankers Are Abandoning Hong Kong as Beijing and Covid Remake the City

In Hong Kong's affluent Mid-levels, in the subtropical foothills of Victoria Peak, the talk today among well-heeled expatriates inevitably turns to one subject: Who will be the next to leave. Down the mile-long escalator, in the skyscrapered Central business district, the quiet exodus is gaining momentum. A few bankers at Citigroup Inc. A few more at JPMorgan Chase & Co., Morgan Stanley and HSBC Holdings Plc. The numbers are small, but they're adding up. A net 71,000 people from all walks of life left Hong Kong in February – a portent, many here worry, of worse to come.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2022-03-06/bankers-are-abandoning-hong-kong-as-beijing-and-covid-remake-the-city>

Barnsley Hospital suspends patient visits due to Covid case rise

Article reports that Barnsley Hospital has suspended non-essential visits to inpatients due to a rise in Covid-19 cases. The decision, made on Friday because of "extreme circumstances", is in force until further notice, Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust said. A trust spokesperson said the move will protect vulnerable patients and reduce the number of people on hospital wards. The hospital has also asked for outpatients to attend alone unless they require a carer also to be present.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-60621636>

UK's Covid outbreak is GROWING: 11% rise in cases puts end to month of falling infections

Britain's daily Covid cases rose for the first time in a month today in a sign the outbreak may be growing again, while hospitalisations also ticked upwards. Government dashboard data shows another 44,017 infections were detected over the last 24 hours, up 11 per cent on the tally last Wednesday. It brings an end to more than four weeks of tumbling daily cases, with about 33,700 cases now being recorded every day on average. Latest hospital data shows 1,040 people were admitted to hospital with the virus on February 26, up seven per cent on the 970 from the previous week. But the seven-day average number of daily admissions is still falling, meaning today's rise could be a blip. Daily Covid deaths, however, have continued to fall, with the 74 victims announced today down 54 per cent in a week

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10569887/UKs-Covid-outbreak-GROWING-11-rise-cases-puts-end-month-falling-infections.html>

Nearly half of Hong Kong's delegates barred from China meetings due to Covid-19

As members of China's lawmaking body file into the Great Hall of the People on Saturday (March 5) to the strains of the Welcome March for the country's largest political gathering, one figure will notably be missing: Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam. The Chief Executive, who is traditionally invited to attend the opening of the National People's Congress (NPC), has turned down her invite to focus on battling the city's most serious coronavirus outbreak yet, with tens of thousands of new cases reported daily this week. Nearly half of Hong Kong's almost 240 delegates, including its sole representative to the NPC Standing Committee, Mr Tam Yiu Chung, have been barred from attending or are under quarantine because of Covid-19. Beijing had ordered the deputies, as delegates are known as, to first self-quarantine in Hong Kong for a week, and undergo another week of centralised quarantine in China's Shenzhen city, before they could attend the meetings in Beijing.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/nearly-half-of-hong-kongs-delegates-barrd-from-china-meetings-due-to-covid-19>

Coronavirus lockdown: what can Hong Kong learn from China's cities?

As Hong Kong contemplates a mass lockdown to contain a runaway increase in coronavirus infections, there is at least a precedent the city can look to to keep daily necessities flowing to people under stay-at-home orders. At the height of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, 11 million people in the central Chinese city of Wuhan spent an unprecedented 76 days in lockdown, with public transport shut down, residential buildings sealed off and residents barred from leaving home. In spite of the extreme measures, people had access to essentials. "I panicked at the beginning of the lockdown," Liu Chaoye, a retired teacher in Wuhan, said. "Food was in short supply and vegetable prices surged. But one week later, everything seemed to be on track."

<https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2022/03/05/coronavirus-lockdown-what-can-hong-kong-learn-from-chinas-cities>

Hong Kong cuts Sinovac jab interval for care home elderly; 52,523 Covid cases logged

Hong Kong has cut the recommended interval between the first and second dose of the Sinovac Covid-19 vaccine for care home residents from four weeks to three, as the city battles a worsening coronavirus crisis with more than 52,500 new cases confirmed on Friday. Officials recorded another 52,523 new coronavirus infections, 11 of which were imported, pushing the overall tally to 403,080 cases. Dr Albert Au Ka-wing, a principal medical and health officer at the Centre for Health Protection, revealed the change for the mainland China-made Sinovac jabs, but said the interval for the German-produced BioNTech vaccine remained the same, at 21 days between the first and second shot.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/health-environment/article/3169204/coronavirus-hong-kong-recovered-elderly-patients>

Belgium to lift most coronavirus measures Monday

Belgium will lift most coronavirus restrictions at the start of next week, shifting its pandemic barometer to Code Yellow, Prime Minister Alexander De Croo announced Friday. Wearing masks will still be recommended but will only remain mandatory for anyone from the age of 12 in health care establishments and in public transport. Masks will no longer be mandatory in schools. Belgium's Covid Safe Ticket — providing proof of vaccination, recovery, or of a negative test — will no longer be required in the hospitality sector or to attend events. Starting March 11, Belgium's travel rules will also change. Notably, travelers coming to Belgium will only be required to complete a Passenger Locator Form if they are arriving from a country not on the so-called white list of countries deemed safe.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/belgium-lift-most-coronavirus-measures/>

COVID and the Russian invasion: Ukraine's dual crisis

Most of us could be forgiven for thinking there were glimmers of light at the end of a very long pandemic tunnel. We are not out of the pandemic yet, but with vaccines, advances in therapeutics and a wealth of knowledge on how the COVID-19 virus works and spreads, things have been improving. However, Russia's recent invasion of Ukraine has opened up a dark chapter, one which will likely drive COVID infections up — not just in Ukraine but in surrounding countries. And history tells us warzones can provide the ideal conditions for infectious diseases to spread. Distracted government institutions, faltering health services, and the congregation of large numbers of vulnerable people, alongside environmental degradation, can create the perfect storm of conditions for an outbreak of a catastrophic infectious disease.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/covid-and-the-russian-invasion-ukraine-e2-80-99s-dual-crisis/ar-AAUv7s1>

Half of Insured Americans Owe Medical Debt, Boosted by Covid

More than half of Americans have medical debt -- whether they have health insurance or not. A recent survey of 1,250 U.S. adults found that 56% owe health-related debt and almost one in six

people with medical bills aren't currently paying it off. A large chunk of the debt came from Covid-19 treatment and testing, according to the poll conducted by Affordable Health Insurance.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-04/half-of-insured-americans-owe-medical-debt-boosted-by-covid>

Hong Kong Mortuaries Bring in Mobile Fridges as Deaths Surge

Hong Kong's mortuaries are so overwhelmed they're deploying mobile refrigeration units to store bodies, as scenes reminiscent of the early days of the pandemic play out amid the city's worst Covid-19 wave yet. Photos taken at the Fu Shan Public Mortuary show four refrigerated units in a car park. Nearby, bags of ice are stacked next to an empty coffin. Hong Kong's resources are straining under the pressure of a record outbreak that's pushed its death rate to one of the highest in the world. Fatalities have been concentrated in the under-vaccinated elderly, and the spread of the virus to more than 750 care facilities - including those that are home to disabled residents - has sparked concerns of worse to come.

https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-04/hong-kong-mortuaries-bring-in-mobile-fridges-as-deaths-surge?utm_source=google&utm_medium=bd&cmpld=google

Exit Strategies

Indonesia, Malaysia to ease COVID curbs on foreign visitors further

Indonesia is considering a quarantine waiver for foreign visitors to its holiday island of Bali from next week, officials said, while neighbour Malaysia announced the removal of curbs on travellers from Thailand and Cambodia. Indonesia and Malaysia have imposed some of the strictest entry procedures in Asia to try to contain COVID-19 outbreaks and keep new variants at bay, but the restrictions have battered their tourism sectors.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/indonesia-malaysia-ease-covid-curbs-foreign-visitors-further-2022-03-05/>

Hong Kong residents urged not to panic ahead of COVID mass testing

Hong Kong reported 31,008 new COVID-19 cases and 153 deaths on Sunday as the city's chief secretary said residents should not worry about a looming mass testing scheme, with details to be announced and authorities ensuring a steady supply of food. The global financial hub is clinging to a "dynamic zero" coronavirus strategy as a massive spike in infections pushed hospitals, isolation centres and funeral parlours beyond capacity. Health experts said around 15% of the city's 7.4 million residents are already infected.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/hong-kong-residents-urged-not-panic-ahead-covid-mass-testing-2022-03-06/>

South Africa: SA Records 1995 New Covid-19 Cases

South Africa has recorded 1 995 new COVID-19 cases which brings the total number of laboratory-confirmed cases to 3 677 686. The majority of new cases stem from Gauteng (37%), followed by Western Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal, each accounting for 21% and 17% respectively. Mpumalanga accounted for 6%, the Free State and North West each accounted for 5%, Eastern Cape accounted for 4% and Limpopo and the Northern Cape each accounted for 2% of the new cases. The Department of Health has recorded 28 deaths, and of these, five occurred in the past 24 - 48 hours. This brings the total fatalities in South Africa to 99 458 to date. According to the department, there has been an increase of 55 hospital admissions in the past 24 hours. With regard to tests conducted, 23 138 425 tests were conducted in both public and private sectors. In the public sector, 10 572 868 tests were conducted, while 12 565 557 tests were conducted in the private sector.

<https://allafrica.com/stories/202203040586.html>

Hong Kong delivery workers in short supply as pressure mounts to fulfil orders

E-commerce platform HKTVmall struggles to make deliveries as workers test positive for coronavirus, placed in quarantine. City's largest wholesaler says rice supply is sufficient but

delivering goods to supermarkets, retail stores has proved difficult

<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/hong-kong-economy/article/3169297/coronavirus-hong-kong-delivery-workers-short>

New York City rolls back its COVID restrictions

Fact check: Phony images masquerading as CNN coverage go viral amid war... Ukrainian woman weds Chicago fiancé ahead of return home New York City has become the latest and largest city in the U.S. to announce it's dropping most of its COVID-19 restrictions as the Omicron surge continues to wind down. Starting Monday, businesses will no longer be required to ask for vaccination cards, and masks will no longer be mandated in public schools for children ages 5 and older. "We have to get our economy back on track," Mayor Eric Adams said on Friday. The city, which was once considered the epicenter of the pandemic, now has a positivity rate of only 1.6% over a 7-day average. In neighboring New Jersey, Governor Phil Murphy announced he is lifting the statewide public health emergency — which includes a mask mandate for schools and day care centers.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/new-york-city-rolls-back-its-covid-restrictions/ar-AAUD4fC>

COVID-19: Cases down 59% in Riverside County compared to two weeks ago

As California gears up for even more masking changes, particularly in public schools, local COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations continue on their downward trend. Riverside County added 1,252 new COVID-19 cases between Monday and Friday. That's down 59% compared to two weeks ago when there were 3,054 COVID-19 cases reported between Feb. 14 and 18. On Friday, the county's case rate was 12.0 per 100,000 residents, and its positivity rate was 5.3%. Both rates are down from what they were on Monday: 17.5 per 100,000 and 6.7%. Among local school districts, Palm Springs Unified School District reported 28 student cases and one staff case on Friday.

<https://www.yahoo.com/entertainment/covid-19-cases-down-59-000616792.html>

Leicester hospitals are hosting fourth dose coronavirus vaccine trials - one person's experience

Leicester's hospitals are running Covid-19 vaccine trials to assess the effectiveness of a fourth dose to boost previous jabs. A number of trusts and NHS sites across the country are taking part in the 'Cov-Boost' studies. One of those studies is looking at the effectiveness of a vaccine designed to protect against the omicron variant, when given as a fourth dose booster.

<https://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/leicester-news/leicester-hospitals-hosting-fourth-dose-6754449>

Big cities drop more COVID-19 measures in push for normalcy

New York City and Los Angeles are lifting some of their strictest COVID-19 prevention measures as officials in big cities around the U.S. push for a return to normalcy after two grueling years of the pandemic. New York City, which has long prided itself as having the nation's toughest COVID-19 safety protocols, will do away with several of its mandates next week, including required masking in public schools and vaccination requirements at restaurants, entertainment and cultural venues, the mayor announced Friday. On the other side of the country, residents in Los Angeles County were no longer required as of Friday to wear masks at restaurants, bars, gyms, shops and other businesses, though the city of Los Angeles is still requiring many indoor businesses to verify that their patrons are fully vaccinated.

<https://apnews.com/article/kathy-hochul-brooklyn-nets-nba-coronavirus-pandemic-sports-5377490ad6db096d52c355d3d7c15757>

Most EU women blame COVID pandemic for spike in gender violence -poll

Nearly three out of four European Union women think the COVID-19 pandemic has spurred an increase in physical and psychological violence against them, according to a Eurobarometer poll published on Friday. The poll, commissioned by the European Parliament ahead of Women's Day on March 8, shows 77% of women in the EU think the pandemic caused a rise in gender violence in

their countries, with nine in 10 respondents in Greece and Portugal saying so.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/most-eu-women-blame-covid-pandemic-spike-gender-violence-poll-2022-03-04/>

Almost a third of people report lingering symptom 6-12 months after COVID-19 -study

Almost a third of people report at least one ongoing symptom between 6 and 12 months after their coronavirus infection, a survey of 152,000 people in Denmark has found. The study includes one of the largest groups yet of people who were not hospitalised with COVID, and followed them for longer than other major studies, the researchers from Denmark's State Serum Institute (SSI) said. The questionnaire-based study suggested that the most commonly reported long-term symptoms were changes in sense of smell and taste, as well as fatigue.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/almost-third-people-report-lingering-symptom-6-12-months-after-covid-19-study-2022-03-04/>

The evolving post-COVID U.S. job market in five charts

In the two years since the COVID-19 pandemic upended the U.S. economy, the labor market has rebounded far faster than most had predicted after roughly 22 million jobs were wiped out in the space of two months in the spring of 2020. As remarkable as the rebound has proven to be, the comeback from the low point in April 2020 has not been evenly spread across industries and demographic groups, with restaurant employment, for instance, still in a deep hole and the share of Black women with jobs trailing the recovery in other groups.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/evolving-post-covid-us-job-market-five-charts-2022-03-04/>

Partisan Exits

Trucks, RVs and cars flock to Washington area to protest COVID restrictions

More than a thousand large trucks, recreational vehicles and cars are gathering on the outskirts of Washington as part of a protest against COVID-19 restrictions that threatens to roll on the U.S. capital in the coming days. The so-called "People's Convoy," which originated in California and has drawn participants from around the country, is calling for an end to all pandemic-related restrictions. It was inspired by demonstrations last month that paralyzed Ottawa, Canada's capital city

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trucks-rvs-cars-flock-washington-area-protest-covid-restrictions-2022-03-05/>

South Africa may destroy 100,000 COVID-19 jabs by end-March due to slow uptake

About 100,000 doses of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine are at risk of being destroyed by the end of this month due to slow uptake by citizens, South African health authorities said on Friday. South Africa has recorded the most coronavirus infections and deaths on the African continent, however inoculations have slowed and the country has ample vaccine stocks of about 25 million doses. "There is a risk that just over 100,000 or so doses which will expire by end of March ... may have to be discarded. It will be a sad day if significant volumes of doses can end up being discarded. We hope it will not reach that stage," Health Minister Joe Phaahla told an online news conference.

<https://english.alarabiya.net/coronavirus/2022/03/04/South-Africa-may-destroy-100-000-COVID-19-jabs-by-end-March-due-to-slow-uptake>

Continued Lockdown

Hong Kong retail chains ration staples to curb COVID panic buying

Two of Hong Kong's largest consumer retail chains started rationing some food and drug items on Friday to curb panic buying that has plagued the city over the past week amid fears of a citywide lockdown as COVID-19 cases soar. Health authorities reported 52,523 new COVID-19 cases on Friday and 136 deaths. This compares with about 100 infections at the start of February and a clean three-month streak of zero cases before the end of December.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/hong-kong-retail-chains-ration-staples-curb-covid-pani>

Scientific Viewpoint

Novavax's Covid-19 Vaccine Moves Closer to FDA Authorization Decision

Novavax's long-awaited Covid-19 vaccine is moving toward U.S. authorization after the company said it resolved manufacturing problems that had held up its application. Clearance in the U.S. isn't imminent because the Food and Drug Administration must sort through a large amount of study data from several countries. A decision is getting closer, however, since Novavax formally submitted an authorization request in late January. If the shot is rolled out in the U.S., it could boost vaccination efforts that have flagged among the hesitant, according to Novavax and doctors.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/novavaxs-covid-19-vaccine-moves-closer-to-fda-authorization-decision-11646562601>

Shionogi Says Covid-19 Vaccine Found Effective and Safe in Study

Japanese drugmaker Shionogi & Co. said its experimental Covid-19 vaccine was found safe and effective in a study, creating an indigenous supply source for the Asian nation that is racing to complete a booster drive in hopes of curbing future outbreaks. The recombinant protein-based vaccine that was being tested as a booster shot met its primary endpoint in the Phase 2/3 trials, Osaka-based Shionogi said in a statement Friday announcing the interim report's findings. There were no serious treatment-related adverse events, deaths or adverse events of special interest, it said.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-04/shionogi-says-covid-19-vaccine-found-effective-and-safe-in-study>

These Covid-19 symptoms raise new questions

Two years ago, the calamitous first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic hit the US with unprecedented intensity. The depth of the terror can be difficult to recall and, thanks to advances in diagnosis, treatment and vaccination, is unlikely to recur. For scientists, however, it is crucial to revisit the dark time and rethink what happened by examining the almost endless data that was collected to try to better understand both the immediate and the long-term effects this disease has on the body. Because so many deaths were due to respiratory failure, many colleagues I talked with expected to find progressive pneumonia with lung destruction as the cause. However, researchers discovered something entirely different: blood clots in the lungs (also referred to as pulmonary emboli). Furthermore, they found countless additional smaller clots in many other organs as well. (Note that experts distinguish between clot and thrombus and embolus but for simplicity, we'll call them all clots.)

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/04/opinions/covid-19-cardiovascular-symptoms-sepkowitz/index.html>

Coronavirus Update: What does the end of COVID-19 rules mean for transmission?

In the past seven days, 39,946 cases were reported, down 4 per cent from the previous seven days. There were 449 deaths announced, down 4 per cent over the same period. At least 4,454 people are being treated in hospitals. Canada's inoculation rate is 13th among countries with a population of one million or more people.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-coronavirus-update-what-does-the-end-of-covid-19-rules-mean-for/>

Imported Covid-19 cases in Shenzhen soar to 96, all from Hong Kong

The southern province of Guangdong reported China's highest number of daily imported Covid-19 cases, accounting for nearly half of the nationwide tally and with all but two cases originating from neighbouring Hong Kong. Of 233 imported cases declared by Chinese health authorities on Friday, as many as 117 were detected in Guangdong, mostly in the tech hub of Shenzhen just across the border from Hong Kong, which is battling an exponential fifth wave of the coronavirus pandemic. Shenzhen detected 96 infections on Thursday, all of them from Hong Kong. Other Guangdong cities

reporting cases from Hong Kong were Zhuhai with six, four each in Zhongshan and Jiangmen, two each in Huizhou and Shanwei, and one in Foshan.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/science/article/3169221/coronavirus-china-shenzhen-spike-96-imported-cases-drive-hong>

One-stop shot - the scientists developing a 'universal' coronavirus vaccine

Researchers are hopeful that a variant-proof vaccine is within their grasp - to protect us from this pandemic and to prevent the next one. Imagine if a single vaccine could protect us against not only new variants of the current coronavirus, Covid-19, but also against coronaviruses that do not yet exist. Buoyed by the creation of several working vaccines against Covid in under a year, scientists now have a "universal vaccine" in their sights. In January, senior US scientists including chief medical advisor Anthony Fauci, called for more research into a universal coronavirus vaccine. The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), a global organisation created to develop vaccines against future pandemics, has earmarked \$200 million for a vaccine to protect against variants of the current virus, SARS-CoV-2, and any coronaviruses that may plausibly emerge in the future.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/optimist/vaccine-world/scientists-developing-universal-coronavirus-vaccine-covid-b985953.html>

Covid Invades Cells in the Penis and Testicles of Monkeys, Study Says

The coronavirus may infect tissue within the male genital tract, new research on rhesus macaques shows. The finding suggests that symptoms like erectile dysfunction reported by some Covid patients may be caused directly by the virus, not by inflammation or fever that often accompany the disease. The research demonstrated that the coronavirus infected the prostate, penis, testicles and surrounding blood vessels in three male rhesus macaques. The monkeys were examined with whole body scans specially designed to detect sites of infection. Scientists — who expected to find the coronavirus in spots like the lungs but did not know where else they would find it — were somewhat surprised by the discovery.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/health/covid-erectile-dysfunction.html>

Covid-19 update: Omicron strain 40% more lethal than flu

The global Covid death toll has passed 5.9 million, with a figure of 5,972,661 according to researchers at Johns Hopkins University. Meanwhile, infections have continued past 440 million to a world wide figure of 440,182,504. The Omicron strain of Covid-19 is at least 40% more lethal than seasonal flu, according Japanese scientists, underscoring the potential danger of lifting pandemic curbs too quickly and underestimating the virus's ongoing health risks. Rates of anxiety and depression rose by about 25% worldwide in the first year of Covid, another indication of the widespread harm on mental health inflicted by the pandemic. Young people were at the greatest increased risk of suicide and self-harm, and women bore the brunt of the emotional and psychological burden, according to a report from the World Health Organization

<https://www.pharmaceutical-technology.com/news/covid-omicron-more-lethal-than-flu/>

Why are vaccination rates still low in some countries?

Why are COVID-19 vaccination rates still low in some countries? Limited supplies remain a problem, but experts say other challenges now include unpredictable deliveries, weak health care systems and vaccine hesitancy. Most countries with low vaccination rates are in Africa. As of late February, 13 countries in Africa have fully vaccinated less than 5% of their populations, according to Phionah Atuhebe, an officer for the World Health Organization's regional office for Africa. Other countries with extremely low vaccination rates include Yemen, Syria, Haiti and Papua New Guinea. For most of last year, developing nations were plagued by a lack of supplies. Rich countries were hoarding doses and many countries didn't have the facilities to make their own vaccines. COVAX — an initiative to

distribute vaccines equally around the world — faltered in delivering shots.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-middle-east-africa-lifestyle-1f2c92d6a306819c363c87661dc7818d>

Arthritis drug could help save Covid patients - study

A drug used to treat rheumatoid arthritis could help to save the lives of patients with severe Covid, researchers have found, and they say its benefits can be seen even when it is used on top of other medications. Experts involved in the Randomised Evaluation of Covid-19 Therapy (Recovery) trial say baricitinib, an anti-inflammatory drug taken as a tablet, can reduce the risk of death from severe Covid by about a fifth. However, they add that when the impact of other medications used alongside the drug are also taken into account, the risk of death could be lowered by well over 50% - although the figure will vary from patient to patient.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/03/arthritis-drug-could-help-save-covid-patients-study>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Ministry of Health urges caution over dropping Covid-19 case numbers

In New Zealand, there were 15,161 new community cases today, more than 3500 fewer than yesterday's total of 18,833. On Friday, it was 22,527. It is the third day running that case numbers have fallen. Covid-19 Modelling Aotearoa project leader Dion O'Neale said the shift to Rapid Antigen Tests and focus on personal responsibility in reporting cases could be throwing numbers off. Urging caution, the ministry said: "The variation in reporting numbers each day means that the rolling average of cases gives a more reliable indicator of testing trends. The seven-day rolling average of cases is today 17,272, up from 16,687 yesterday".

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/462835/ministry-of-health-urges-caution-over-dropping-covid-19-case-numbers>

Mexico reports 308 more COVID-19 deaths, 9,748 new cases

Mexico reported 308 more fatalities from COVID-19 on Friday, bringing the total death toll since the pandemic began to 319,604, according to health ministry data. The country also reported 9,748 new confirmed cases of the virus, bringing the total to 5,554,392.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/mexico-reports-308-more-covid-19-deaths-9748-new-cases-2022-03-04/>

NI prisons are seeing a spike in cases of Covid-19

Prisons in Northern Ireland are seeing a spike in Covid-19 case numbers, a Stormont committee has heard. Ronnie Armour, Director General of the Northern Ireland Prison Service, told the Justice Committee that in Maghaberry Prison in Co Antrim, 11 prisoners in Bush House tested positive around three weeks ago. In the same prison, he said 31 prisoners in Davis House have tested positive, and one prisoner at Magilligan in the north west

<https://uk.news.yahoo.com/ni-prisons-seeing-spike-cases-184535657.html>

Covid-19: Nisra records 33 deaths in past week in Northern Ireland

There has been an increase in the number of Covid-19-related deaths registered in Northern Ireland. The government statistics agency, Nisra, said in the week up to 25 February, the virus was mentioned on the death certificates of 33 people - two more than the previous week. It brings the total number of deaths registered by the agency to 4,300. The Department of Health's total up to last Friday, based on a positive test recorded, was 3,205. Nisra's figures are higher, because it records mentions of the virus on death certificates, where it may or may not have been confirmed by way of a test. Of the agency's measure, more than two thirds of Covid-19-related deaths have occurred in hospital (69.6%).

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-60618207?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=KARANGA

When teens blow off pleas to get Covid-19 vaccines, the consequences can be deadly

Kennedy Stonum, a high school junior, deflected repeated entreaties from her father to please get

vaccinated against Covid-19. "I would send her articles. I would send her studies. I would send her whatever I thought might either scare her enough about Covid to get the vaccine or allay her concerns enough about the vaccine," said Lee Stonum, 41, a public defender in Orange County, California. His mother, who lives in Cleveland, also sent emails to her granddaughter urging her to get the shots. "She was very skilled at blowing it off," Stonum said of his only child. "It was constantly, 'OK, I'll think about it.' It was never an outright 'no.' "

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/04/health/teen-covid-19-vaccine-holdout-khn-partner-wellness/index.html>

Coronavirus: Greece reports 16,060 new cases, 56 deaths

Greek authorities announced 16,060 new cases of coronavirus and 56 fatalities in the past 24 hours Friday. Thirty-one of the 16,060 cases involved international visitors tested upon arrival. Greece's total number of confirmed coronavirus cases is now 2,486,262, with 26,092 dead. A total of 389 patients remain intubated in intensive care units while 4,296 have left ICU.

<https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/1179010/coronavirus-greece-reports-16060-new-cases-56-deaths/>

Scotland records more than 9,500 cases of coronavirus and 24 new deaths

Article reports that the number of reported new Covid infections in Scotland has reached its highest for almost two months, with 9,551 more cases. That is the highest daily total since January 11 – although a change in the way the Scottish Government reports the figures means cases of people re-infected with the virus are now included. The latest figures showed almost one in 10 (9.3%) of Friday's cases were reinfections. And the total is almost 4,000 more than the 5,848 cases that were announced just a week ago on Friday February 25.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/scotland-scottish-government-covid-b2028723.html>

Life in South Asia returns to normal as COVID cases decline

Shoppers buy produce at an open air market in Ahmedabad, India, Thursday, March 3, 2022. Slowly but steadily, life in South Asia is returning to normal, and people hope the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic is behind them. Experts are optimistic that the omicron surge, which brought relatively low levels of death, has reinforced immunity from vaccines, which are widespread in the region. Slowly but steadily, life in South Asia is returning to normal, and people hope the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic is behind them. Experts are optimistic that the omicron surge, which brought relatively low levels of death, has reinforced immunity from vaccines, which are widespread in the region. The markets are crowded again. Traffic is jamming the roads. Migrant workers have returned to the cities. And young people are back at schools and universities – many of them for the first time in years. It isn't quite how things were before the COVID-19 pandemic – mask mandates still exist in some places – but with infections steadily declining, life in South Asia is returning to a sense of normalcy. The mental scars from last year's delta-driven surge persist – especially in India, where health systems collapsed and millions likely died – but across the region high vaccination rates and hope that the highly contagious omicron variant has helped bolster immunity are giving people reasons to be optimistic.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-business-pandemics-infectious-diseases-08b9fb1b55d77b7657f48245c29b9885>