

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

11th Apr 2022

Lockdown Exit

China labels U.S. concerns over COVID regulations 'groundless accusations'

China's foreign ministry expressed "strong dissatisfaction" with the United States late on Saturday after it raised concerns over China's coronavirus control measures. The U.S. State Department said on Friday that non-emergency staff at its Shanghai consulate and families of U.S. employees could leave due to a surge in COVID cases and coronavirus restrictions in the city. "We express strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition to the groundless accusations against China's pandemic prevention policy from the U.S. in its statement, and have lodged solemn representations," foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said in a statement.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-labels-us-concerns-over-covid-regulations-groundless-accusations-2022-04-10/>

Shanghai seeks to reassure residents over COVID-hit supplies

Shanghai reported nearly 25,000 locally transmitted COVID-19 infections on Sunday and sought to assure locked-down residents of China's most populous city that supply bottlenecks affecting availability of food and other items would ease. Streets remained largely silent in the city of 26 million people as curbs under its "zero tolerance" policy allow only healthcare workers, volunteers, delivery personnel or those with special permission to move freely.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-covid-cases-keep-rising-food-supply-problems-persist-2022-04-10/>

U.K.'s Johnson Refuses to Rule Out Further Covid-19 Lockdowns

U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson refused to rule out further Covid-19 lockdowns, saying only that it would be "irresponsible" to do so. The virus is currently "losing its potency overall," Johnson told GB News, but "there could be a new variant more deadly" that emerges in future. "I can't rule out something, I can't say we wouldn't be forced to do non-pharmaceutical interventions again of the kind we did," he said. Johnson was interviewed by two Members of Parliament from his own ruling Conservative Party -- Esther McVey and Philip Davies -- for the news channel, which published extracts on Friday. The comments are likely to alarm those Tories who want him to reject the possibility of any further lockdowns, amid concerns over mental health and civil liberties.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-08/u-k-s-johnson-refuses-to-rule-out-further-covid-19-lockdowns>

Saudi Arabia expands Haj to 1 mln pilgrims, easing COVID curbs

Saudi Arabia will let up to 1 million people join the Haj pilgrimage this year, greatly expanding the key event to participants from outside the kingdom after two years of tight COVID restrictions, state media said on Saturday. Pilgrims to Mecca this year must be under age 65 and fully vaccinated against the coronavirus, the ministry of Hajj and Umrah said in a statement carried by the SPA news agency. Participants from abroad will be allowed this year but must present a recent negative COVID PCR test, and health precautions will be observed, it said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-raises-number-haj-pilgrims-allowed-one-mln-this-year-spa-2022-04-09/>

Shanghai's Omicron Outbreak Corners Chinese Leader

After two years of relying on broad, hard-edged lockdowns to control Covid-19, Chinese leader Xi Jinping tried something new in Shanghai. Mindful of the economic toll and public anger from China's zero-Covid strategy, Mr. Xi gave the city leeway to tackle local outbreaks, people close to the

government's decision-making said. The idea was to let Shanghai target only affected neighborhoods with lockdowns. If successful, the approach would offer a template for coexisting with the virus in the years ahead. Instead, China's most populous city saw Covid-19 cases surge by nearly five times over the past week. While low by Western standards, Shanghai's tally Thursday of more than 20,000 has pushed the country's daily total to record highs. Now Mr. Xi faces a spiraling outbreak and the return of lockdowns, a twinned dilemma other world leaders hope their nations never see again.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/shanghai-omicron-outbreak-corners-chinese-leader-11649423941>

Second Covid Booster Vaccines: Are Fourth Shots Effective?

Everyone agrees that more coronavirus variants are likely. But how much the virus will evolve and how long existing vaccines will continue protecting against severe cases of Covid-19 remains uncertain. That's led a short list of countries to recommend second boosters of existing vaccines for the especially vulnerable. These doses -- often referred to as a fourth shot, though it will be the third for those who initially got the single-dose immunization made by Johnson & Johnson -- are essentially a stopgap measure. Longer term, many researchers believe the vaccines will need to be periodically updated to counteract new strains, just as flu shots are tweaked annually.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-08/are-second-boosters-effective-what-s-known-so-far-quicktake>

Shanghai Sees Another Record Covid Cases Friday at Over 23000

Shanghai announced another round of mass coronavirus testing, while the southern metropolis of Guangzhou said it will do the same for all 18 million residents, as authorities accelerate efforts to curb China's worst outbreak since the early days of the pandemic. The nationwide tally for Friday was 25,701 new cases, with more than 23,600 from Shanghai, a new record, according to official data. Shanghai Deputy Mayor Zong Ming announced tweaks to the government's lockdown policy at a press briefing Saturday. Overall measures remained stringent, however, as residents living in communities with Covid cases in the past seven days are barred from leaving their homes, while those residing in compounds without infections in the past week won't need to be confined to their homes, but can't leave those areas.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-09/shanghai-sees-another-record-covid-cases-friday-at-over-23-000>

India to widen COVID booster effort to all adults from Sunday

India will offer booster doses of COVID-19 vaccine to all adults from Sunday, although free third doses will be limited to frontline workers and those older than 60 who get them at government centres. The country has given 1.85 billion vaccine doses among its population of 1.35 billion. Of these, 82% are the AstraZeneca dose made domestically and called Covishield. Those older than 18 who received a second dose nine months ago will be eligible for the "precaution" dose, the health ministry said, using the government's term for boosters.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/all-indian-adults-be-eligible-booster-covid-vaccine-doses-april-10-2022-04-08/>

Fauci: US 'likely' to see fall COVID-19 surge

President Biden's chief medical adviser Anthony Fauci predicted Wednesday that there will likely be a rise in COVID-19 cases in the coming weeks as well as a potential surge in the fall. "I think we should expect, David, that over the next couple of weeks, we are going to see an uptick in cases -- and hopefully there is enough background immunity so that we don't wind up with a lot of hospitalizations," Fauci told Bloomberg TV's David Westin. Fauci, who serves as director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said that the increase in infections could come as a result of waning immunity and the loosening of COVID-19 restrictions across the U.S.

<https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/3263037-fauci-us-likely-to-see-fall-covid-19-surge/>

Covid-19: Ending free testing is a mistake

In light of escalating rates of infection, hospital admissions, and rising sickness absence rates, the UK government should reconsider the end to free covid-19 testing. Helpfully, in the UK, we now have nine more “official” symptoms to consider when deciding if we might have covid-19. What we do not have is universally free testing so many people are left to make up their own minds about whether they have a cold, hay fever, normal aches and pains, or indeed covid-19. If they can afford to, and can find stocks, they can buy a lateral flow test. On the day that free testing finished, we saw one of the highest infection rates of the pandemic so far, with one in 13 of us infected with covid-19.¹ We have now got the highest number of people with covid-19 being admitted to hospital, each week, since the pandemic began, and covid-19-related deaths reaching a level not seen for a while. The UK government’s strategy for “Living with covid-19” clearly means potentially living with chaos. This chaos is typified by the woeful communications that surround the government’s decisions. How will this new state of being affect the public, NHS staff, and those who are clinically extremely vulnerable—and what should be done about it?

<https://www.bmj.com/content/377/bmj.o936>

WHO: Two-thirds of people in Africa may have had COVID

More than two-thirds of people living in Africa may have contracted COVID-19 over the past two years, about 97 times more than the number of reported infections, a World Health Organization (WHO) report has suggested. Laboratory tests have detected 11.5 million COVID-19 cases and 252,000 fatalities across the African continent. But according to the report released on Thursday, some 800 million people could have already been infected by last September. Officials at the WHO’s Africa region said the study – which is still being peer-reviewed – suggests the officially confirmed numbers were “likely only scratching the surface of the real extent of coronavirus infections in Africa”. “A new meta-analysis of standardised sero-prevalence study revealed that the true number of infections could be as much as 97 times higher than the number of confirmed reported cases,” said WHO Africa boss Matshidiso Moeti.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/8/two-thirds-of-africans-may-have-had-covid-who-study>

The leaked WTO COVID patent waiver text promises a very bad deal

In October 2020, South Africa and India’s governments tabled a bold proposal (PDF) at the World Trade Organization (WTO) to temporarily waive intellectual property (IP) protections for producing COVID-19 vaccines and other coronavirus-related medical tools for the duration of the pandemic. The proposal aimed to address an urgent problem: multinational pharmaceutical companies and their backers using their monopoly power to prevent vaccine and medical product manufacturers across the world from scaling up production to meet global needs. It has been more than a year since the proposal was tabled, and the ongoing disparities in access to timely supplies of vaccines and other key technologies show the need for a waiver agreement is still as urgent as ever.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2022/4/8/the-leaked-wto-covid-patent-waiver-text-promises-a-very-bad-deal>

Women of Lesotho's garment industry lose jobs, hope in COVID

Vekile Sesha stood outside the rusted gates of a garment factory in the industrial district of Lesotho’s capital, Maseru, willing her luck to change. Four months earlier, the blue jeans factory where she worked nearby abruptly shut, blaming plummeting demand from the Western brands it supplied amid the pandemic. She had loved the job fiercely: “I was talented, and I was doing something that was needed by the world.” Her monthly paycheck of 2,400 loti (about \$150) supported a constellation of family members in her rural village. “Because of me, they never slept on an empty stomach,” she said.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-business-only-on-ap-lesotho-d62642fa9df6bfd07c6cc788630f5919>

Are Second Covid Booster Shots Effective? What Experts Know So Far

Everyone agrees that more coronavirus variants are likely. But how much the virus will evolve and

how long existing vaccines will continue protecting against severe cases of Covid-19 remains uncertain. That's led a short list of countries to recommend second boosters of existing vaccines for the especially vulnerable. These doses -- often referred to as a fourth shot, though it will be the third for those who initially got the single-dose immunization made by Johnson & Johnson -- are essentially a stopgap measure. Longer term, many researchers believe the vaccines will need to be periodically updated to counteract new strains, just as flu shots are tweaked annually.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-08/are-second-boosters-effective-what-s-known-so-far-quicktake?srnd=premium-europe>

Exit Strategies

Shanghai Has Recorded More Than 130,000 Covid Cases—and No Deaths

In a Covid-19 outbreak that has locked 25 million people at home, the city of Shanghai has reported more than 130,000 cases since March 1, but says there have been no deaths and currently only one patient with severe illness. The absence of deaths, and the low incidence of severe illness recorded in Shanghai as cases rise, stands out compared with outbreaks elsewhere, even accounting for the fact that Covid deaths often lag behind infections by several weeks. Hong Kong has followed a similarly strict model as mainland China in the pandemic, and saw a steep rise in deaths following a recent outbreak there. In March, the city reported tens of thousands of cases and hundreds of deaths a day. Taiwan, with many fewer cases than the mainland, reported a Covid death on Saturday, the fourth this year.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/shanghai-has-recorded-more-than-130-000-covid-casesand-no-deaths-11649588402>

Shanghai residents question human cost of China's COVID quarantines

Lu, 99, was a long-time resident at Shanghai's Donghai Elderly Care hospital, her loved ones secure that she was getting round-the-clock care at the city's largest such centre. That was before COVID-19 struck China's biggest city last month, the country's worst outbreak since the virus emerged in Wuhan in late 2019, infecting multiple patients, doctors and care workers at the 1,800-bed facility. Orderlies posted cries for help on social media, saying they were overwhelmed. Relatives told Reuters that there had been several deaths.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-residents-question-human-cost-chinas-covid-quarantines-2022-04-10/>

Covid Could Be Surging in the U.S. Right Now and We Might Not Even Know It

The rise of Covid cases in some regions of the U.S., just as testing efforts wane, has raised the specter that the next major wave of the virus may be difficult to detect. In fact, the country could be in the midst of a surge right now and we might not even know it. Testing and viral sequencing are critical to responding quickly to new outbreaks of Covid. And yet, as the country tries to move on from the pandemic, demand for lab-based testing has declined and federal funding priorities have shifted. The change has forced some testing centers to shutter while others have hiked up prices in response to the end of government-subsidized testing programs. People are increasingly relying on at-home rapid tests if they decide to test at all. But those results are rarely reported, giving public health officials little insight into how widespread the virus truly is.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-10/covid-19-could-be-spreading-undetected-in-u-s?srnd=premium-europe>

Vaccine group Gavi secures \$4.8 billion in funding pledges for COVAX

The global vaccine alliance Gavi has secured \$4.8 billion in funding pledges for the vaccine-sharing scheme COVAX, an official said on Friday, falling just shy of its target. "It is really putting us in a very comfortable position," Marie-Ange Saraka-Yao, managing director for resource mobilization at Gavi, told a virtual media briefing. The group had previously said it needed an additional \$5.2 billion to continue delivering COVID-19 vaccines at scale as part of its global programme that delivers shots to poorer countries

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/vaccine-group-gavi-secures-48-blm-funding-pledges-co-vax-2022-04-08/>

China's Covid Lockdowns Hit Supplies to Companies Like Apple and Tesla

Manufacturers are struggling to keep some of their China operations going as extended and widening Covid-19 lockdowns choke off supplies and clog up truck routes and ports, heaping more pressure on the stretched global supply chain. Stringent government measures to contain the country's Covid-19 outbreak, the worst in more than two years, are locking down tens of millions of people, mostly in and around the industrial heartland of Shanghai. The curbs are keeping many workers at home, restricting output at some factories and closing others, including component makers for Apple Inc. and Tesla Inc. Tesla, which suspended work at its factory in Shanghai on March 28, still hasn't set a date for restarting production, according to people familiar with the matter. The electric-vehicle giant said it is implementing Covid-19 control requirements and setting work arrangements according to government policies.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/manufacturers-grind-to-a-halt-in-china-as-lockdowns-expand-11649343420>

U.K. Underlying Wage Growth Stagnated After Covid, Study Shows

Britain's underlying wage growth stagnated after the coronavirus pandemic, a study by the Resolution Foundation showed, casting doubt on concerns that the nation faces an inflationary spiral. The researcher said its measure of average pay, adjusting for differences in the nature of individual workers, remained 2.7% last year, the same as in 2019 before the coronavirus hit. Resolution said that higher headline wage growth in official figures is mainly due to the end of the government's furlough program and out-sized gains in four industries struggling to attract workers

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-08/u-k-underlying-wage-growth-stagnated-after-covid-study-shows>

Shanghai widens COVID testing as other Chinese cities impose curbs

Shanghai on Friday announced a record 21,000 new cases and a third consecutive day of COVID testing as a lockdown of its 26 million people showed no sign of easing and other Chinese cities tightened curbs - even in places with no recent infections. Beijing authorities intervened in Shanghai after its failure to isolate COVID by locking the city down in stages, and insists that the country stick to its zero-tolerance policy to prevent its medical system from breaking down. Authorities across China, which have mostly managed to keep COVID at bay for the last two years, are stepping up coronavirus control measures, including movement restrictions, mass testing and new quarantine centres.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-widens-covid-testing-other-chinese-cities-impose-curbs-2022-04-08/>

'Anti-Covid pill helped me within hours'

A Kent woman with coronavirus is among the patients who have received a cutting-edge anti-Covid drug at home that improves symptoms "within hours". The antiviral treatment which reduces the risk of serious illness have been provided to more than 32,000 patients since being introduced for patients outside of hospital in December. One of the latest treatments, known as Paxlovid, was found in trials to slash hospitalisation and deaths by 88%, and has been given to more than 6,000 patients already - with more than 1,400 patients benefitting in the last seven days alone. One patient to have benefitted is Helen West, 56, from Walderslade, Chatham who was offered Paxlovid. Helen has ankylosing spondylitis, a rare long-term condition in which the spine and other areas of the body become inflamed, painful and stiff, requiring her to take medication that suppresses her immune system

<https://www.kentonline.co.uk/medway/news/anti-covid-pill-helped-me-within-hours-265276/>

COVID-19: Infections have levelled off and may have started falling, official data shows

The surge in COVID infections has levelled off and may have started to decline, according to the

latest official data. Figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show 4,883,100 people in the UK had the disease in the week to 2 April. That's a fall of 0.5% from the week before. It confirms the trend shown on the COVID dashboard a fortnight ago.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-infections-have-levelled-off-and-may-have-started-falling-official-data-shows-12585283>

Can US tenants cope with COVID eviction protections ending?

Housing rights campaigner Rob Robinson and Legal Aid's Beth Mellen on the housing crisis in the United States. "Once the courts open up, we will see a rush to evict," says housing rights campaigner Rob Robinson. America's federal moratorium on evictions ended in August last year and, with COVID housing protections almost all gone, the expected wave of evictions will likely worsen the country's homelessness crisis. Robinson himself was unhoused for two years and eventually "found his way out". But he warns against the narrative that unhoused people should be able to "pull themselves up by their bootstraps".

<https://www.aljazeera.com/program/upfront/2022/4/8/can-us-tenants-cope-with-covid-eviction-protections-ending>

UK airport warns COVID-related delays could last months

A major British airport warned passengers on Friday to expect the delays plaguing travel to continue for months, as the U.K. aviation regulator told the country's air industry to shape up after weeks of canceled flights and long airport queues. The head of Manchester Airport in northwest England said passengers could face waits of up to 90 minutes to get through security "over the next few months." Travelers in Britain have suffered days of delays during the current Easter school holiday break, with British Airways and easyJet canceling hundreds of flights because of coronavirus-related staff absences, and long lines building at airport check-in, security and baggage points.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-business-health-travel-europe-b8a76bd2f4b1a1ae9e20cdcc682e4765>

'Get used to it': Outbreaks give taste of living with virus

The U.S. is getting a first glimpse of what it's like to experience COVID-19 outbreaks during this new phase of living with the virus, and the roster of the newly infected is studded with stars. Cabinet members, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Broadway actors and the governors of New Jersey and Connecticut have all tested positive. Outbreaks at Georgetown University and Johns Hopkins University are bringing back mask requirements to those campuses as officials seek out quarantine space. The known infections likely reveal only the tip of the iceberg — with actors and politicians regularly tested at work. Official case figures are certain to be vast undercounts of how widely the virus is circulating because of home testing and mildly sick not bothering to test at all.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-living-with-virus-outbreaks-26ce89a748b27b3a47730d29a947237a>

Partisan Exits

School Reopening Mess Drives Frustrated Parents Toward GOP

Democrat Jennifer Loughran spent the pandemic's early days sewing face masks for neighbors. Last month, as a newly elected school-board member, she voted to lift the district's mask mandate. That came four months after she voted for the state's Republican candidate for governor. After a monthslong political identity crisis, Ms. Loughran decided her opposition to her party's mask mandates, economic restrictions and school-closure policies outweighed her support for positions on climate change, abortion and gay rights, at least for the moment. Watching her daughter fall behind in virtual kindergarten, Ms. Loughran had grown so frustrated not knowing when her children would return to the classroom that she joined a group that attracted right-leaning parents in its school-reopening push. She was unhappy that Gov. Phil Murphy didn't fight to reopen schools sooner, and she associated his fellow Democrats with mask mandates and restrictions.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-school-reopenings-midterm-elections-democrats-republicans-11649286564>

USDA's Vilsack Tests Covid-Positive in Latest Washington Case

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said he tested positive for Covid-19, adding to the list of Biden administration officials infected with the virus. Vilsack, 71, experienced mild symptoms on Friday, his office said in a statement. The government of Mexico, where Vilsack met officials on Monday and Tuesday, has been informed out of "an abundance of caution," though he tested negative upon his departure and return, according to his office. Other positive cases this week include Attorney General Merrick Garland and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi tested positive on Thursday, a day after joining President Joe Biden and other lawmakers for a bill signing at the White House.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-09/usda-s-vilsack-tests-covid-positive-in-latest-washington-case>

Fauci Says It's Up to Each Person to Assess Their Covid Risk Now

Americans need to make their own medical risk assessments as Covid-19 cases accelerate in the U.S., President Joe Biden's chief medical adviser said, reflecting a less virulent virus and public exhaustion with restrictions. "This is not going to be eradicated and it's not going to be eliminated," Anthony Fauci said on ABC's "This Week" on Sunday. "And what's going to happen is that we're going to see that each individual is going to have to make their calculation of the amount of risk that they want to take." Fauci's comments contrast with more dire warnings he issued during earlier phases of the pandemic since 2020.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-10/fauci-says-it-s-up-to-each-person-to-assess-their-covid-risk-now>

NYC mayor Adams tests positive for COVID, only symptom is 'raspy voice'

New York City Mayor Eric Adams tested positive for COVID-19 on Sunday after waking up in the morning with a "raspy voice," his only symptom, a spokesperson said, becoming one of the latest high-profile Gridiron dinner attendees to come down with the virus. Adams, 61, will cancel all his public events for the remainder of the week and will immediately begin taking anti-viral medications, the spokesperson, Fabien Levy, said in a statement. "While he is isolating, he will continue to serve New Yorkers by working remotely," the statement said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/nyc-mayor-adams-tests-positive-covid-only-symptom-is-raspy-voice-spokesperson-2022-04-10/>

Spain to probe socialite's multi-million euro COVID supply contracts

A Spanish court will investigate whether huge commissions charged by an aristocratic entrepreneur and his partner on the sale of vital health supplies to Madrid city hall at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic constituted illegal profiteering. Well-known socialite Luis Medina and his partner Alberto Luceno sold \$12 million worth of surgical gloves, face masks and rapid testing kits to Madrid, pocketing commissions of between 60% and 70% that they spent on luxury cars, lavish hotel stays and a yacht, the anti-corruption prosecutor's office said on Wednesday. The prosecutor said the pair obtained "an exaggerated and unjustified economic benefit" and accused Medina and Luceno of aggravated fraud, forgery and money laundering.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/spain-probe-socialites-multi-million-euro-covid-supply-contracts-2022-04-07/>

European Central Bank head says she's positive for COVID-19

European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde tweeted Thursday that she tested positive for COVID-19 and has mild symptoms but will continue working from home. "I am vaccinated and boosted, and my symptoms are thankfully reasonably mild," Lagarde, 66, wrote on Twitter. "I will work from home in Frankfurt until I am fully recovered. There is no impact on the ECB's operations." The news conference she typically holds following the meeting of the Frankfurt-based bank's rate-setting council is slated to go ahead next Thursday, with the format to be decided in the coming days. Lagarde's tweet comes as numerous European countries have dropped nearly all their

COVID-19 restrictions and are battling a surge of the virus fueled by the highly infectious omicron subvariant BA.2. Another tweet from Lagarde shows her speaking unmasked with European finance ministers at a meeting Monday.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/christine-lagarde-ap-covid-frankfurt-germany-b2053185.html>

Airlines that dropped mask requirements are now suffering staff shortages due to COVID-19

Overseas airlines are having to cancel hundreds of flights as they grapple with coronavirus-related staffing shortages weeks after they ditched rules requiring passengers and staff to mask up in the air. The disruptions also come as the CEOs of leading U.S. airlines urge the Biden administration to roll back a federal rule requiring that masks be worn in the sky. Masks have not been required on flights operated by budget-friendly, Swiss airline EasyJet since March 27, the airline said in a statement. The move came after the UK removed all travel restrictions earlier in March.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/flights-canceled-covid-mask-rules-dropped-airlines/>

Shanghai jumps into group buying to stay fed during COVID lockdown

When Shanghai first went into full COVID-19 lockdown last week, Ping Mai wasn't expecting she'd become her housing compound's unofficial broker for its meat supply. With her and her neighbours stuck at home and struggling to buy food amid lockdown curbs that have shuttered stores and dramatically reduced the number of couriers, she is among millions that are trying to figure out how to buy fresh supplies on a daily basis. One popular solution has been community group-buying, which sees residents at the same address band together to bulk buy groceries or meals from suppliers or restaurants, placing single orders that could add up to thousands of dollars.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-jumps-into-group-buying-stay-fed-during-covid-lockdown-2022-04-08/>

Continued Lockdown

Shanghai carries out more COVID tests as food supply frustrations rise

Shanghai carried out another round of mass COVID-19 testing on Saturday, this time testing residents at least twice in a single day, as a city official in China's financial hub acknowledged shortcomings in the handling of the outbreak. It was the fourth consecutive day of city-wide testing in Shanghai, which reported a record 23,600 new locally transmitted cases. While those case numbers are small by global standards, the city has become a test bed for the country's elimination strategy, which seeks to test, trace and centrally quarantine all positive COVID cases.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-official-says-handling-covid-outbreak-below-expectations-lockdown-2022-04-09/>

Scientific Viewpoint

Study finds U.S. COVID-19 vaccinations averted 2.2 million deaths

A new study published Friday found COVID-19 vaccinations have prevented 2.2 million deaths in the United States. The Commonwealth Fund study said 17 million hospitalizations were averted by the vaccines between December 12, 2020, and March 31, 2022. More than \$899 billion was saved in healthcare costs due to the vaccines, according to the Commonwealth Fund study. The study found there would have been 66 million more COVID-19 infections without the vaccinations.

https://www.upi.com/Health_News/2022/04/08/COVID19-commonwealth-fund-study-vaccines-prevented-millions-of-deaths/1421649425164/

COVID: Vulnerable coronavirus patients getting at-home treatment which improves symptoms 'within hours'

More than 32,000 vulnerable COVID patients in England have been treated with "cutting-edge" antiviral drugs which improve symptoms "within hours", the NHS has said. The health service has procured nearly five million doses of Pfizer's Paxlovid and other antivirals, such as Molnupiravir, via a

deal struck by the government. Paxlovid was found in trials to cut coronavirus hospital admissions and deaths by 88% and has been given to more than 6,000 patients already - 1,400 in the last seven days alone. Molnupiravir, which clinical trials suggest reduces the risk of hospital admission or death by 30%, was approved in November 2021 and has been used as an at-home treatment since December.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-vulnerable-coronavirus-patients-getting-at-home-treatment-which-improves-symptoms-within-hours-12585804>

Long COVID-19 research has Busselton baby boomers helping scientists understand virus's effects

As researchers around the world try to determine the long-term impacts of COVID-19, data from a regional community in Western Australia is helping unravel the mystery of the virus. The City of Busselton is not just home to the iconic timber jetty. It's also home to the Busselton Population Medical Research Institute, which holds some of the most detailed community-health data in Australia. For more than a decade, Busselton researchers have been taking samples and running health checks on volunteer baby boomers at different stages of their lives, to help identify chronic-disease patterns and risk factors.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-04-09/long-covid-how-busselton-is-at-the-heart-of-research/100956374>

More COVID-19 boosters are in our future. An immunologist explains why

Most vaccines don't create what we call sterilizing immunity, which means that you absolutely never carry that virus ever again. Your body does not carry it. So if we think about the ones that do — measles would be a good example — but most [vaccines] don't. So to level set our expectations, it's not normal for a vaccine to be able to completely train the immune system in such a way that virus doesn't even get a start. And, as a consequence, even if you are vaccinated —and we're certainly seeing this in the context of Omicron — you can still get the virus, carry the virus and pass on the virus. Certainly if everyone was vaccinated and totally up to date on their vaccination, the frequency with which carrying that and transmitting it happens is lower. But we should set our expectations to something reasonable.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/covid-19-prevention-nasal-spray-dawn-bowdish-1.6411922>

In Washington's Covid-19 outbreak, new variants flout old 'close contact' rule

Washington, DC is coping with a cluster of high-profile Covid-19 cases after a series of public events exposed high-level officials. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Sens. Susan Collins and Raphael Warnock, and Rep. Peter DeFazio have all this week announced that they tested positive. Health experts say the outbreak may be rooted, in part, in outdated and confusing guidelines from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that help people assess their risk of getting the virus that causes Covid-19 or passing it on to others.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/08/health/covid-19-close-contact-outdated-rule/index.html>

Omicron spawns U.S. search for better kids' masks, new standard

The fast-spreading Omicron variant stoked U.S. interest in better masks for children to ward off COVID-19, and that is adding fuel to an effort that could set the stage for domestic oversight of their quality.

<https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/omicron-spawns-us-search-better-kids-masks-new-standard-2022-04-08/>

In Early Testing, Nasal Spray Shows Signs It Can Fight COVID-19

Over two years into the pandemic, researchers are still searching for new and better ways to help people avoid COVID-19. While COVID-19 vaccines and boosters have been helpful at protecting people from severe hospitalization and death, they have been less effective at preventing symptomatic cases of the disease. Now researchers are looking at novel ways to keep COVID-19 from infecting human cells. Researchers Trusted Source at Cornell University have been testing a

nasal spray that blocks COVID-19 infection. Their study discovered a small molecule that, if sprayed into the nose, may help prevent COVID-19 from infecting cells. The study is still in its early stages and is currently only being tested in mice. But experts are hopeful that this type of study may help lead to better protection against the virus.

<https://www.healthline.com/health-news/in-early-testing-nasal-spray-shows-signs-it-can-fight-covid-19>

Pfizer Covid-19 booster shots approved for children aged 12-15 by Therapeutic Goods Administration

Australia's medical regulator has given approval for 12 to 15-year-olds to receive a COVID-19 booster. The Therapeutic Goods Administration gave provisional approval for people in the Year 7 to 10 age range to receive the Pfizer booster. A final green light will need to be given by the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation before the boosters can be rolled out to them. The medical regulator has recommended the booster be given six months after the primary course of a COVID-19 vaccine.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10698885/Pfizer-Covid-19-booster-shots-approved-children-aged-12-15-Therapeutic-Goods-Administration.html>

COVID-19: Damage to heart's pacemaker cells may explain arrhythmia

A new study^{Trusted Source} exploring the link between SARS-CoV-2 infection and irregularities in heart rate and rhythm (arrhythmia) is shedding light on how the virus causes disruption in the body's cardiovascular system. The research, reported in the journal *Circulation Research*, explores recent findings that heart abnormalities are a common symptom of COVID-19 and could be a consequence of SARS-CoV-2 affecting the specialized pacemaker cells of the heart. The research was carried out by a team from Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City, which included Shuibing Chen, Ph.D., associate professor of surgery, chemical biology, and biochemistry; Robert Schwartz, MD, Ph.D., assistant professor of medicine; and Todd Evans, Ph.D., professor and vice-chair for research, in addition to Benjamin tenOever, Ph.D., a faculty member at the Grossman School of Medicine and NYU Langone Health at New York University.

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/covid-19-and-the-heart-can-sars-cov-2-cause-arrhythmia>

Women in healthcare and life sciences: The ongoing stress of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a seismic shift in the workforce, with a specific impact on women. Millions of Americans have resigned from their jobs, and many have cited unmanageable workloads or a need to care for family as important factors in their decision. The healthcare sector is no exception. Our most recent analysis is based on the seventh annual *Women in the Workplace* data (for 2021), by McKinsey and LeanIn.Org. That research looks at drop-offs in female representation, promotion rates, and external hiring at the highest levels in healthcare; at the barriers to advancement for women of color and at threats to recent gains. In many cases, these outcomes are correlated with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, including reports of increased responsibilities at home and higher levels of burnout.

<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/healthcare-systems-and-services/our-insights/women-in-healthcare-and-life-sciences-the-ongoing-stress-of-covid-19>

ECDC and EMA Issue Advice on Fourth Doses of mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines

ECDC and EMA have concluded that it is too early to consider using a fourth dose of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines in the general population. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European Medicine Agency's (EMA's) COVID-19 task force (ETC) have concluded that it is too early to consider using a fourth dose of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines in the general population. The vaccines being referred to are Pfizer's Comirnaty and Moderna's Spikevax. ECDC and EMA concluded that there is currently no clear evidence in the European Union that adults with normal immune systems will benefit from a fourth dose. However, in adults aged 80 years and older, the agencies

agreed that a fourth dose may be administered for the protection against COVID-19. There may be a reevaluation of recommending a fourth dose for adults aged 60 to 79 years depending on the epidemiological situation changes and new data. As of now, there is no clear evidence that the current three-dose vaccination system is decreasing in effectiveness for this age group.

<https://www.biopharminternational.com/view/ecdc-and-ema-issue-advice-on-fourth-doses-of-mrna-covid-19-vaccines>

Board: Physician-legislator's COVID directive has no weight

The Kansas board that licenses health care providers raised concerns Friday about a letter that a physician-legislator sent to doctors suggesting that they prescribe ivermectin and other medications that aren't approved to treat the virus. The Kansas Board of Healing Arts said that the "unprecedented" letter from Kansas Sen. Mark Steffen carried no legal or regulatory weight but has caused "confusion and concern" in the Kansas medical community, The Kansas City Star reports. Steffen, who is an anesthesiologist, said that health care providers will be shielded from the board's "interference" in the letter that he sent last week on Senate stationery. The Hutchinson Republican said previously that the board is investigating him.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-business-hutchinson-kansas-fca6345c35166ec5a216f9a47d4c27fe>

COVID-19: Omicron symptoms less severe than Delta variant, study concludes

The research concluded that those with Omicron were less likely to be admitted to hospital and lose their sense of smell than people with Delta. Symptoms do not tend to last as long in vaccinated individuals with the current dominant variant than in people with Delta, at 6.87 days versus 8.89 days. The findings support earlier studies that suggest the incubation time and period of infectiousness for Omicron is shorter than for previous COVID strains. Research showed that the loss of sense of smell appeared in 52.7% of Delta cases, while it showed up in less than 20% of Omicron cases - marking the biggest difference between the two.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-omicron-symptoms-less-severe-than-delta-variant-study-concludes-12584703>

Study sheds light on death spike in Hong Kong COVID-19 surge

Hong Kong's surge began in early January with a cluster of Omicron infections in a quarantine hotel. Its fifth wave peaked on Mar 4, along with a mortality rate of 37.7 per million population that was among the highest in the world during the pandemic. Officials reported 5,906 deaths as of Mar 21 during the Omicron surge. Of eligible people in Hong Kong, 64% had received at least two vaccine doses and 5% had gotten a booster dose, but coverage varied by age. Only 49% of people ages 60 and older had gotten at least two doses, with coverage declining as people got older. Among the deaths, 96% occurred in people ages 60 and older, and of those 70% were unvaccinated. "The high overall mortality rate during the ongoing 2022 Hong Kong Omicron COVID-19 outbreak is being driven by deaths among unvaccinated persons aged ≥ 60 years," the team wrote. In weighing other factors, the team compared Hong Kong's surge with New Zealand, which has a lower population density but, like Hong Kong, was thought to largely have vaccine-induced immunity due to vaccination combined with low infection levels during earlier waves.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/04/study-sheds-light-death-spike-hong-kong-covid-19-surge>

Shanghai's high asymptomatic COVID rate could be due to including mild cases

Shanghai's unusually high proportion of asymptomatic cases among its reported COVID-19 infections could be partly explained by blurred lines between "mildly symptomatic" and asymptomatic cases. Authorities in China's financial centre ordered a lockdown in response to the worst outbreak in the country since the virus first emerged in Wuhan in late 2019. Shanghai counted more than 20,000 new cases on April 7, but the asymptomatic rate has stood at around 97%, far higher than anywhere else in the world, where it has been closer to 50%.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghais-high-asymptomatic-covid-rate-could-be-due-including-mild-cases-2022-04-08/>

Moderna recalls thousands of COVID vaccine doses in Europe

Moderna Inc said on Friday it was recalling 764,900 doses of its COVID-19 vaccine made by its contract manufacturer Rovi (ROVI.MC) after a vial was found contaminated by a foreign body. No safety issues have been identified, Moderna said about the lots that were distributed in Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden in January. The drugmaker said the contamination was found in just one vial, and it was recalling the whole lot out of "an abundance of caution". It did not disclose what was found in the vial.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/moderna-recalls-thousands-covid-vaccine-doses-2022-04-08/>

Coronavirus Resurgence

New COVID-19 variant Deltacron has been detected in Australia, here's what we know

A new variant of COVID-19 has been detected in Australia, which is a hybrid of two previous strains. Deltacron has been described as mixture of the Delta variant, which spread through Australia last year, and the Omicron variant, which led to high case loads across the nation over the Christmas holidays and into this year. The new variant was initially detected in February in the north of France and has been steadily popping up around the world, particularly in Europe and the United States. Confirmation that the first Deltacron case in Australia was reported by New South Wales on Friday and on Saturday Queensland Health said "a number of cases" had also been detected here through genomic sequencing.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-04-09/qld-coronavirus-covid-new-variant-deltacron/100958122>

China reports 1350 new confirmed COVID cases on April 8 vs 1576 a day earlier

China reported 1,350 new confirmed coronavirus cases on April 8, the country's national health authority said on Saturday, compared with 1,576 a day earlier. Of the new cases, 1,334 were locally transmitted, the National Health Commission said, compared with 1,540 a day earlier. The number of new asymptomatic cases, which China counts separately, stood at 23,815 compared with 22,648 a day earlier.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-reports-1350-new-confirmed-covid-cases-april-8-vs-1576-day-earlier-2022-04-09/>