

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

3rd May 2022

Lockdown Exit

New York City Raises Covid-19 Alert Level to 'Medium' as Case Numbers Rise

The recent uptick in Covid cases across New York City has prompted increased caution from the city. The city has moved to a "medium" alert level from "low" as new cases per 100,000 people over the last seven days has surpassed 200. The latest figure of 209.02 cases per 100,000 is the highest since early February. New York City Health Commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasan and Mayor Eric Adams said they've seen an increase in hospitalizations from the latest wave. At an unrelated press conference on Monday, they repeated calls for vaccinations, boosters, indoor masking to help the city curb the rise in virus cases.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-05-02/new-york-city-raises-covid-19-alert-level-as-case-numbers-rise>

U.N. chief calls for debt relief, post-COVID investment on West Africa trip

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Sunday urged debt relief for African countries and more investment to help their economies recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and weather the impacts of the Ukraine war. The United Nations chief spoke in Senegal on the first leg of a trip that will also include Niger and Nigeria, where he will visit communities affected by conflict and climate change. Supply disruptions due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine have caused simultaneous food, energy and finance crises in Africa and beyond, Guterres said. The coronavirus pandemic pushed many poor countries into debt distress and the Ukraine war has disrupted their economic recovery, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Public debt ratios in sub-Saharan Africa are at their highest in more than two decades, the IMF said last week.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/un-chief-calls-for-debt-relief-post-covid-investment-on-w-africa-trip/ar-AAWOeze>

Tears and chocolate as New Zealand opens its borders to 60 more countries

New Zealand welcomed thousands of travellers from around the globe on Monday as the country opened its borders to visitors from around 60 nations including the United States, Britain and Singapore for the first time since COVID-19 hit in early 2020. Maori cultural performers sang songs at the arrivals gate in Auckland and travellers were handed popular locally made chocolate bars as the first flights came in from Los Angeles and San Francisco.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/tears-chocolate-new-zealand-opens-its-borders-60-more-countries-2022-05-02/>

Poland has no 'rationale to invoke force majeure in Pfizer vaccine deal, EU official says

Poland has no "coherent rationale" to invoke force majeure in an existing contract in order to stop paying for more COVID-19 vaccines from Pfizer, a European Commission official told Reuters. In April Poland's health minister Adam Niedzielski said Warsaw had informed the European Commission and Pfizer that it would no longer take or pay for COVID-19 vaccines under a supply contract co-negotiated by the EU, acknowledging this would trigger a legal conflict.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/poland-has-no-rationale-invoke-force-majeure-pfizer-vaccine-deal-eu-official-2022-05-02/>

Amazon ends COVID paid leave for U.S. workers

Amazon.com will end its paid time-off policy for employees with COVID-19 from May 2, the company told U.S.-based staff on Saturday. The change follows the availability of COVID-19 vaccines and

revised guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it said. The U.S.-based staff will now get five days of excused, unpaid leave following a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis, Amazon told workers in a message it provided to Reuters.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/amazon-ends-covid-paid-leave-us-workers-2022-05-01/>

Greece lifts COVID curbs for travellers ahead of key summer season

Greece lifted COVID-19 restrictions on Sunday for foreign and domestic flights, its civil aviation authority said, ahead of the summer tourism season that officials hope will see revenues bouncing back from the pandemic slump. To fly in or out of the country, travellers were previously required to show either a vaccination certificate, a certificate saying they had recovered from coronavirus or a negative test. From May 1, passengers and crew will need only to wear a face mask, the civil aviation authority said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/greece-lifts-covid-curbs-travellers-ahead-key-summer-season-2022-05-01/>

Covid-19 Cases Rise in the U.S., With Limited Impact

As new Omicron variants further infiltrate the U.S., a jumble of signals suggest the latest increase in Covid-19 infections hasn't sparked a commensurate surge in severe illness even as risks remain. Covid-19 virus levels detected in wastewater in the Northeast, the first region to see significant concentrations of the easily transmitted Omicron BA.2 variant, appear to have flattened out in the past two weeks. Covid-19 hospital admissions have risen in the region, but they remain far below levels during earlier surges that indicated widespread severe illness and taxed healthcare facilities. "This wave of Covid in the United States, in the places where it is, is not dangerous in a way that prior waves of Covid were," said Megan Ranney, an emergency physician and academic dean at Brown University's School of Public Health.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-cases-rise-in-the-u-s-with-limited-impact-11651397401>

COVID's new Omicron sub-lineages can dodge immunity from past infection, study says

Two new sublineages of the Omicron coronavirus variant can dodge antibodies from earlier infection well enough to trigger a new wave, but are far less able to thrive in the blood of people vaccinated against COVID-19, South African scientists have found. The scientists from multiple institutions were examining Omicron's BA.4 and BA.5 sublineages - which the World Health Organization last month added to its monitoring list. They took blood samples from 39 participants previously infected by Omicron when it first showed up at the end of last year.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/covids-new-omicron-sub-lineages-can-dodge-immunity-past-infection-study-2022-05-01/>

Taiwan calls China's COVID lockdowns 'cruel', says won't follow its steps

China's lockdowns to control the spread of COVID-19 are "cruel" and Taiwan will not follow suit, Premier Su Tseng-chang said on Sunday. Having controlled the pandemic with tough border controls and quarantines, Taiwan has been dealing with a surge in domestic infections since the start of this year, with some 75,000 infections driven by the Omicron variant. But with more than 99% of those having mild or no symptoms, a handful of deaths so far and high vaccination levels, the government has moved to ease restrictions as it seeks normalcy and to gradually reopen the island of 23 million people to the outside world

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/taiwan-calls-chinas-covid-lockdowns-cruel-says-wont-follow-its-steps-2022-05-01/>

South Africa's Aspen COVID-19 vaccine plant risks closure after no orders, executive says

Africa's first COVID-19 vaccination plant, touted last year as a trailblazer for an under-vaccinated continent frustrated by sluggish Western handouts, risks shutting down after receiving not a single order, a company executive said on Saturday. South Africa's Aspen Pharmacare (APNJ.J) negotiated a licensing deal in November to package and sell Johnson & Johnson's (JNJ.N) COVID-19 vaccine and

distribute it across Africa. The World Health Organization (WHO) called the deal a "transformative moment" in the drive towards levelling stark inequalities in access to COVID vaccines.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/safricas-aspen-covid-19-vaccine-plant-risks-closure-after-no-orders-executive-2022-05-01/>

AstraZeneca beats quarterly estimates, maintains forecasts

AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine still has a role to play in the fight against the pandemic, even as sales slow and the company charges more in some places, CEO Pascal Soriot said on Friday, the latest drugmaker to warn about a global supply glut. The comments come after the company reported better-than-expected first-quarter profit and sales driven by the vaccine, its second bestseller last year raking in \$3.9 billion. It also confirmed its forecast that 2022 sales of the shot would fall.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/astrazeneca-beats-quarterly-estimates-maintains-forecasts-2022-04-29/>

China's April factory activity contracts amid Shanghai lockdown - official PMI

China's factory activity contracted at a steeper pace in April, as widespread COVID-19 lockdowns curbed production and disrupted supply chains, an official survey showed on Saturday. The official manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) fell to 47.4 in April from 49.5 in March, for a second straight month of contraction, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said. The 50-point mark separates contraction from growth on a monthly basis.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-april-service-sector-activity-contracts-second-month-official-pmi-2022-04-30/>

More than 12 million in Shanghai can leave homes as COVID risk ebbs

As many as 12.38 million Shanghai residents, nearly half the population of China's financial hub, are now in lower-risk areas, meaning they can leave their homes, the government said on Friday. Shanghai, battling China's biggest ever COVID-19 outbreak, put the entire city into lockdown at the beginning of the month, though it has cautiously lifted some restrictions on residential areas that have gone two weeks without a positive case.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-says-1238-mln-residents-now-lower-risk-covid-zones-2022-04-29/>

'Entry only. No exit:' Beijing sees more COVID closures as anger grows in Shanghai

China's capital Beijing closed more businesses and residential compounds on Friday, with authorities ramping up contact tracing to contain a COVID-19 outbreak, while resentment at the month-long lockdown in Shanghai grew. In the finance hub, fenced-in people have been protesting against the lockdown and difficulties in obtaining provisions by banging on pots and pans in the evenings, according to a Reuters witness and residents.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/beijing-closes-more-venues-anger-shanghais-covid-lockdown-grows-2022-04-29/>

Russia's total number of COVID-related deaths surpasses 800000

Russia's total number of COVID-related deaths has exceeded 803,000 since the start of the pandemic in April 2020, Reuters calculations based on new data from the Rosstat state statistics service showed on Friday. Rosstat said that 35,584 people had died of COVID-19 or related causes in March, down from 43,543 in February.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russias-total-number-covid-related-deaths-surpasses-800000-2022-04-29/>

Ukraine seeks urgent WHO meeting on impact of invasion on health

Ukraine, backed by dozens of other countries, has written to the World Health Organization's regional chief calling for an urgent meeting on the impact of Russia's invasion on health and healthcare, a letter obtained by Reuters on Friday showed. The letter, sent this week by Ukraine's

diplomatic mission in Geneva, Switzerland, where the WHO is headquartered, is signed by some 38 other members of the agency's European region, including France, Germany and Britain.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-backed-by-dozens-countries-seeks-urgent-who-meeting-invasion-impact-2022-04-29/>

Exit Strategies

Setback for Shanghai's COVID battle; Beijing focus on mass testing

China's commercial capital of Shanghai was dealt a blow on Monday as authorities reported 58 new COVID-19 cases outside areas under strict lockdown, while Beijing pressed on with testing millions of people on a May Day holiday few were celebrating. Tough coronavirus curbs in Shanghai have stirred rare public anger, with millions of the city's 25 million people stuck indoors for more than a month, some sealed inside fenced-off residential compounds and many struggling for daily necessities. While Shanghai officials said the situation is improving, images on social media have unnerved the public at a time when hospitals and mortuaries in the city are overwhelmed. On Monday, authorities said they were investigating five officials after videos showed a local care home transferring an elderly person in a body bag to a mortuary. The person was later found to be still alive.

<https://uk.finance.yahoo.com/news/summary-1-setback-shanghai-covid-042101871.html>

The New Jet Set: How the COVID-driven boom in private jets is still flying high

Guy Stockbridge runs multiple businesses from his headquarters in central California, including landscape companies that ripple across his home state and a utility solar business with operations in 17 states. Flying is a way of life for Stockbridge and others at his company, Elite Team Offices, based in Clovis. For years they flew both privately and on commercial flights out of Fresno, roughly 10 miles from Clovis. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and private jet ownership became more and more attractive.

<https://www.msn.com/en-ca/travel/news/the-new-jet-set-how-the-covid-driven-boom-in-private-jets-is-still-flying-high/ar-AAWPC3P>

Setback for Shanghai's COVID battle as Beijing ramps up mass testing

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<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/setback-shanghai-covid-battle-beijing-focus-mass-testing-2022-05-02/>

Beijing, Shanghai Outbreaks Renew Debate Over China's Covid-19 Strategy

With Beijing and Shanghai struggling to control Covid-19 outbreaks, China's pandemic strategy faces a moment of truth. The highly infectious Omicron variant of the coronavirus has shut down Shanghai for more than a month. Its threat to do the same to the country's capital is fueling debate over whether China needs to shift its zero-tolerance approach. Most of Shanghai's 25 million residents remain confined to their homes, with little expectation of a quick return to normal life. Daily new infections have fallen in recent days, but public-health experts say any loosening of control measures could prompt a resurgence, overwhelming the healthcare system and exacting an unacceptably high toll on the elderly and unvaccinated.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/beijing-shanghai-outbreaks-renew-debate-over-chinas-covid-19-strategy-11651430825>

China Contagion Threatens to Derail the World's Emerging Markets

A widespread selloff in China is rippling through emerging markets, threatening to snuff out growth

and drag down everything from stocks to currencies and bonds. Fresh Covid outbreaks -- and the government's stringent policy to contain them -- are spooking global investors who fear shutdowns in China will echo across the world by lowering demand and disrupting supply chains. That's pushing them to sell not just China's currency, bonds and stocks but the assets of any developing nation which relies heavily on trade with the second-biggest economy. The result is the sharpest slide in emerging markets in two years, not unlike the meltdown in 2015 when China's woes led to a rout in their bonds and currencies, besides wiping out \$2 trillion from equity values. Since then, the country's influence on the global economy has only grown: It's now the largest buyer of commodities, meaning its slump may impact exporters of raw materials and their markets more than ever.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-05-01/china-contagion-threatens-to-derail-the-world-s-emerging-markets>

Greece lifts COVID curbs for travellers ahead of key summer season

Greece lifted COVID-19 restrictions on Sunday for foreign and domestic flights, its civil aviation authority said, ahead of the summer tourism season that officials hope will see revenues bouncing back from the pandemic slump. To fly in or out of the country, travellers were previously required to show either a vaccination certificate, a certificate saying they had recovered from coronavirus or a negative test.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/greece-lifts-covid-curbs-travellers-ahead-key-summer-season-2022-05-01/>

As Beijing tightens COVID curbs, hard-hit Shanghai sees signs of life

The Chinese capital Beijing tightened COVID restrictions on Sunday as it battled an outbreak, while Shanghai let more of its 25 million residents venture out for light and air after reporting a second day of zero infections outside of quarantine areas. The outbreak in Shanghai, which began in March, has been China's worst since the early months of the pandemic in 2020. Hundreds of thousands have been infected and the city has forbidden residents from leaving their homes, to great public anger.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/mainland-china-reports-8329-new-covid-cases-april-30-vs-10793-day-earlier-2022-05-01/>

How to Make the CDC Matter Again

For many years, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was known as the world's preeminent public-health agency. No longer. During the pandemic, the CDC stumbled repeatedly. Accused of incompetence, overreach and muddled messaging, it is now in need of repair. Director Rochelle Walensky was right to order a review of the agency's operations in early April. She shouldn't shrink from significant reforms. To be sure, some of the CDC's troubles have resulted from political interference. Donald Trump's White House sought to undermine the agency by second-guessing its guidance and advice. Political operatives pushed to revise some of its publications and revoked its authority to gather hospital Covid data from the states.

[bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2022-05-02/the-cdc-needs-reform-to-restore-public-trust-after-covid-19?srnd=premium-europe](https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2022-05-02/the-cdc-needs-reform-to-restore-public-trust-after-covid-19?srnd=premium-europe)

Italy, Greece Relax Covid Restrictions, Open to Tourists

For travellers heading to Europe, summer vacations just got a whole lot easier. Italy and Greece relaxed some COVID-19 restrictions on Sunday before Europe's peak summer tourist season, in a sign that life was increasingly returning to normal. Greece's civil aviation authority announced that it was lifting all COVID-19 rules for international and domestic flights except for the wearing of face masks during flights and at airports. Previously, air travelers were required to show proof of vaccination, a negative test or a recent recovery from the disease. As of Sunday, visitors to Italy no longer have to fill out the EU passenger locator form, a complicated online ordeal required at airport

check-in.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-05-01/italy-greece-relax-covid-restrictions-before-tourism-season>

China's Covid-19 Defenses Have a Missing Piece: Vaccinating the Elderly

In its fervor to fight Covid-19, China has gone all out with a now-familiar protocol of mass testing and lockdowns. It now has to catch up on a missing piece in its defense: Many of the country's elderly and most vulnerable citizens haven't gotten vaccinated. While about 88% of Chinese people had received two doses of Covid-19 vaccines as of mid-March, the ratio among those over 80—those most at risk of severe illness and death from an infection—was just 51%. Fewer than one in five people over 80 had received a booster as of mid-March, according to government data. In Shanghai, that figure is 15%. Among Chinese over 60, 50 million people remain entirely unvaccinated.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-covid-19-defenses-have-a-missing-piece-vaccinating-the-elderly-11651226400>

Ecuador lifts indoor and outdoor mask mandates

Ecuador will immediately lift mask mandates for both indoor and outdoor spaces thanks to significant gains made against coronavirus, President Guillermo Lasso said on Thursday. The decision is based on vaccination figures of 87% for those aged 3 and over and COVID-19 test positivity rates of just 5%, he said, as well as an effort to give second booster shots to adults.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/ecuador-lifts-indoor-outdoor-mask-mandates-2022-04-29/>

China's COVID policy in line with pursuing economic progress, expert says

China's "dynamic-zero" policy against COVID-19 is in line with pursuing economic progress, rather than in conflict with it, a senior health expert said on Friday. The battle against COVID is an all out "people's war", Liang Wannian, head of the COVID response expert panel under the National Health Commission, made the comment at a news briefing.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-covid-policy-line-with-pursuing-economic-progress-expert-says-2022-04-29/>

Hong Kong's mandatory COVID testing in schools fuels plastic waste woes

A Hong Kong government rule that all school students and staff take daily COVID-19 tests will add massively to the city's plastic waste problem, environmental activists say, with some 20 million kits a month set to be dumped at bursting landfills. The mandatory rapid antigen tests (RAT), and their plastic accessories are expected to worsen marine and land pollution in the financial hub of 7.4 million people where some beaches and hiking trails are already awash with microplastics.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/hong-kongs-mandatory-covid-testing-schools-fuels-plastic-waste-woes-2022-04-29/>

Hong Kong eases COVID rules for aircrews, lifts overseas travel alert

Hong Kong will shorten mandatory hotel quarantine for passenger flight crews to three days from seven, while cargo crews will be exempt, modest steps at unwinding coronavirus curbs that have turned the city into one of the world's most isolated places. The changes, which take effect in May, give the global financial hub's aviation trade and logistics industries "much needed survival space", the government said

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/hong-kong-eases-covid-rules-aircrews-lifts-overseas-travel-alert-2022-04-29/>

Shanghai reports zero cases outside quarantined areas for April 29

China's Shanghai reported zero COVID-19 cases outside its quarantined areas for April 29, the first time since the recent outbreak in the eastern financial hub, according to local health authorities. The city recorded 8,932 new local asymptomatic coronavirus cases on April 29, versus 9,545 a day earlier, the local government said in a statement on Saturday. Confirmed symptomatic cases in Shanghai stood at 1,249, down from 5,487 the previous day, it said, adding that all the

asymptomatic and confirmed cases were found in quarantined areas.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-reports-zero-cases-outside-quarantined-areas-april-29-2022-04-30/>

Partisan Exits

COVID threatens new U.S. Senate delays for Biden's Fed, FTC nominees

An effort by U.S. Senate Democrats to move forward on President Joe Biden's nominees for the Federal Reserve and Federal Trade Commission appeared headed for a second week of delay on Monday, after another Democratic lawmaker tested positive for COVID-19. Senator Michael Bennet of Colorado said on Twitter that he tested positive for the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 on Sunday, adding that he would quarantine at home in Denver for the week. "I'm experiencing minor, cold-like symptoms and plan to work virtually," Bennet said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/covid-threatens-new-us-senate-delays-bidens-fed-ftc-nominees-2022-05-02/>

Sharon Osbourne: Ozzy on the Mend After Covid Diagnosis

Sharon Osbourne has thanked fans for their support after her husband Ozzy was diagnosed with Covid, revealing the rocker is "on the mend". The talk show presenter took to Twitter with the news on Saturday, posting a GIF that carried the text: "Thank You for all the well wishes and support! "Ozzy is much better and on the mend!" Osbourne revealed her husband's diagnosis on Thursday and said she was "very worried" about the Black Sabbath star, 73, who has Parkinson's disease.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-05-01/sharon-osbourne-ozzy-on-the-mend-after-covid-diagnosis>

Expats flee as Shanghai's COVID lockdown drags

Shanghai's heavy-handed COVID-19 lockdown is driving scores of foreign residents to flee the commercial centre, denting the appeal of mainland China's most cosmopolitan city and prompting others to rethink their futures in the metropolis. While no official statistics are available for departures in recent weeks, pet movers, property agents and law firms say they are seeing a sharp uptick in departure queries, while online chat groups swapping advice on how to leave the city amid lockdown curbs have swelled.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/expats-flee-shanghais-covid-lockdown-drags-2022-04-28/>

China, North Korea halt border rail crossing over COVID fears

China has suspended cross-border freight train services with North Korea following consultations after COVID-19 infections in its border city of Dandong, the foreign ministry said on Friday. The suspension came within four months after North Korea eased border lockdowns enforced early in 2020 against the coronavirus, measures global aid groups have blamed for its worsening economic woes and risks to food supplies for millions.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/nkorea-halts-rail-crossings-with-china-where-covid-is-rise-yonhap-2022-04-29/>

Cut off from home, Chinese diaspora frustrated at zero-COVID policy

Beijing's zero-COVID strategy has had dire consequences for the millions Chinese living abroad, most of whom have been unable to see family and friends at home for two years even as the rest of the world eases travel restrictions. Some cannot afford the sky-high cost of flights and others fear getting stuck in harsh lockdown on arrival. All of them are anxious about the well-being of loved ones back in China.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/cut-off-home-chinese-diaspora-frustrated-zero-covid-policy-2022-04-29/>

Swiss commandos lose court fight over COVID-19 jabs

Four members of Switzerland's special forces who were fired for refusing to get vaccinated against COVID-19 have lost their bid for reinstatement, a court said on Friday. "By refusing to be vaccinated for no valid medical reason, the four servicemen deliberately put themselves in a position where they could no longer perform their professional duties," the Federal Administrative Court said in a

summary of its ruling, which can be appealed at the supreme court.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/swiss-commandos-lose-court-fight-over-covid-19-jabs-2022-04-29/>

Continued Lockdown

China's hotels brace for May holiday bust as COVID lockdowns weigh

For the Fengxi Inn guest house, China's annual May Day holiday is usually a sell-out period, with guests booking out its rooms weeks in advance due to its location nestled in the green lush hills of the country's southwestern Guizhou region. But it is expecting much fewer visitors this year for the upcoming holiday, even after slashing room rates and blasting promotions on social media, as China fights its largest outbreak since the virus emerged in Wuhan in late 2019 with lockdowns and curbs on movement.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-hotels-brace-may-holiday-bust-covid-lockdowns-weigh-2022-04-29/>

Shanghai factories scramble to reopen as COVID lockdown lingers

Companies reopening factories in locked-down Shanghai are booking hotel rooms to house workers and turning vacant workshops into on-site isolation facilities as authorities urge them to resume work while complying with tough COVID-19 curbs. Hundreds of companies including multinationals Tesla and 3M have reopened factories in the Chinese economic hub under local guidelines requiring them to isolate workers inside a "closed-loop".

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-factories-scramble-reopen-covid-lockdown-lingers-2022-04-29/>

Scientific Viewpoint

Covid Testing Stations to Disappear in Oslo as City Moves On

Norway's capital is gradually closing its municipal testing stations as it removes a general recommendation for the city's residents to test for Covid-19. May 9 will be the last day that people can test at the public stations, the Oslo municipality said in a statement on its website. People wishing to get checked before traveling internationally will need to use private providers, it said. Norway ranked first for a second month in Bloomberg's Covid Resilience Ranking in April. The Nordic nation is among a growing group that no longer have Covid-related travel curbs in place, and has even scrapped a requirement to self-isolate after a positive result.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-05-02/covid-testing-stations-to-disappear-in-oslo-as-city-moves-on>

Better Vaccines Are in Sight — for the Next Pandemic

Arcturus Therapeutics, a San Diego biotech company, may have just laid out a template for how to make vaccines for the next pandemic. Its new vaccine, which uses self-copying mRNA, appears to work well against current strains of Covid. It's just that the product is coming in too late to matter in the current pandemic. But data from a large clinical trial suggest the technology should be explored for the next one — and it may have many other uses, too. In a study that enrolled more than 16,000 people, Arcturus's "self-amplifying" mRNA vaccine was 95% protective against severe disease and death and about 55% effective in preventing symptomatic Covid.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2022-05-02/better-vaccines-are-in-sight-for-the-next-pandemic>

Pfizer says COVID treatment Paxlovid fails to prevent infection of household members

Pfizer said a large trial found that its COVID-19 oral antiviral treatment Paxlovid was not effective at preventing coronavirus infection in people living with someone infected with the virus. The trial enrolled 3,000 adults who were household contacts exposed to an individual who was experiencing symptoms and had recently tested positive for COVID-19. They were either given Paxlovid for five or 10 days or a placebo.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/pfizer-says-covid-treatment-paxlovid-fails-prevent-infection-household-members-2022-04-29/>

South Africa's Aspen COVID-19 vaccine plant risks closure after no orders, executive says

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<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/safricas-aspen-covid-19-vaccine-plant-risks-closure-after-no-orders-executive-2022-05-01/>

Chinese Omicron-specific mRNA COVID vaccine candidate to be trialed in UAE

China's Suzhou Abogen Biosciences Co said its COVID-19 vaccine candidate using the messenger RNA (mRNA) technology and targeting the Omicron variant has obtained clinical trial approval in the United Arab Emirates. With Friday's announcement, Abogen joins Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna in trialing candidates modified specifically against Omicron, a highly transmissible variant with increased resistance to antibodies elicited by existing shots.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/chinese-omicron-specific-mrna-covid-vaccine-candidate-be-trialed-uae-2022-04-30/>

Pfizer's Covid-19 Pill Failed Study Testing Its Preventive Use

The Covid-19 pill from Pfizer Inc. failed to prevent symptomatic infections in adults who had been exposed to the pandemic virus, a late-stage study found. Pfizer said Friday that the drug, named Paxlovid, failed the study's main objective of meaningfully reducing the risk of confirmed and symptomatic Covid-19 infections in adults who were exposed to the virus by someone in their household. Paxlovid was cleared for use in December by U.S. health regulators to treat people 12 years and older early in the course of their disease who are at high risk of developing severe Covid-19.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/pfizers-covid-19-pill-failed-study-testing-its-preventative-use-11651276069>

Mystery Liver Disease: CDC Says Covid Not Cause of Pediatric Hepatitis Cases

U.S. health officials cast doubt on Covid-19 as a potential cause of severe hepatitis that's been seen in dozens of previously healthy children around the world, while adding weight to the possibility it's caused by a more common virus linked to stomach ailments. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Friday released its most detailed report yet on nine cases of pediatric hepatitis in Alabama that have captured national attention. All the patients tested negative for Covid-19 at the hospital and had no documented history of infection with SARS-CoV-2, the report said. Covid has shown it can damage a variety of organs, including the liver, raising the possibility that it could be linked to the more than 160 worldwide cases seen so far of unexplained liver disease in children. U.K. experts said earlier this week that the condition might be connected to adenoviruses, a family of pathogens that more commonly cause cold and flu symptoms.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-29/cdc-casts-doubt-on-covid-causing-kids-mysterious-liver-cases>

U.S. Seeks 'Urgent' Data on Covid Relapses After Using Pfizer's Drug

U.S. government researchers are planning studies of how often and why coronavirus levels rebound in some Covid patients who have completed a five-day course of treatment with Pfizer Inc.'s Paxlovid. "It is a priority," said Clifford Lane, deputy director for clinical research at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, calling the issue "a pretty urgent thing for us to get a handle on." The agency is discussing a variety of possible epidemiological and clinical studies to examine post-Paxlovid rebound with scientists at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, he said. The demand for answers is rising as Paxlovid has become a key element of the Biden administration's pandemic approach, with the drug being made available at pharmacies nationwide.

Among other questions the NIH hopes to get a better handle on is how often viral rebounds occur after five days of Paxlovid treatment, who's at risk for relapse, and whether it could be avoided with a longer regimen.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-29/u-s-seeks-urgent-data-on-covid-relapses-after-pfizer-drug>

Child hepatitis cases rise in UK amid worldwide outbreak

The UK Health Security Agency has identified 34 confirmed hepatitis cases in children since Monday, bringing the total number to 145 amid a series of unexplained cases among children around the world. The agency said 10 children had received liver transplants but none had died. Findings suggested that the rise in sudden cases in children may be linked to a common cold virus known as an adenovirus, the UKHSA said, adding that the agency was also investigating other possible infections, including COVID-19 or an environmental cause.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/britains-ukhsa-says-hepatitis-cases-children-rises-145-2022-04-29/>

Pfizer's Covid Drug Fails to Show Benefit as Preventive Therapy

The drug, Paxlovid, failed to meet its primary goal of significantly reducing the risk of Covid-19 infection in adults exposed to the virus through a household contact, Pfizer said in a statement Friday. The drug reduced risks by about a third compared with a placebo, which didn't meet the threshold for statistical significance. Chief Executive Officer Albert Bourla said he was "disappointed" by the study results. Expanding Paxlovid's use to people who hadn't yet tested positive for Covid-19 but have had close contact with an infected person would have opened up a large potential new market for the drug. Paxlovid is already one of the fastest sellers of all-time in the pharmaceutical industry, with projected sales of almost \$24 billion in 2022, according to a forecast from analytics group Airfinity Ltd. Shares of New York-based Pfizer fell as much as 3.9% in extended trading before paring declines.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-29/pfizer-s-covid-drug-fails-to-show-benefit-as-preventive-therapy>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Beijing reports 36 new symptomatic local COVID cases for May 1

China's capital of Beijing reported 36 new symptomatic COVID-19 cases for May 1, down from 53 cases a day earlier, Xinhua news agency said on Monday. The city also recorded five asymptomatic cases for May 1, versus six a day earlier, it said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/beijing-reports-36-new-symptomatic-local-covid-cases-may-1-2022-05-02/>

Shanghai marks COVID milestone, Beijing on edge

Shanghai said on Saturday it had detected no new daily COVID-19 cases outside quarantine areas, marking a milestone in its battle to contain the virus, which has paralysed the city of 25 million and put residents in the capital Beijing on edge. Streets in Beijing were eerily quiet at the start of a five-day Labour Day break, with residents anxious that authorities would impose further restrictions during a holiday when many typically travel or socialise.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-hits-key-milestone-covid-battle-china-cases-fall-2022-04-30/>

Six Shanghai districts reach 'zero-COVID' status

China's financial hub of Shanghai has reined in COVID transmission risks at the community level, excluding cases in quarantine centres, with six of its 16 districts attaining zero-COVID status, an official said on Sunday. This status is achieved when a district has three consecutive days with no new daily increases in infections, city government official Gu Honghui told a news conference. Public transport will be allowed to resume in five of the six districts, a city health official added, but did not say when.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/six-shanghai-districts-reach-zero-covid-status-2022-05-01/>

China's Manufacturing Activity Contracted Further in April

Readings of Chinese factory and service-sector activity worsened dramatically in April, falling to their lowest levels since the early days of the Covid-19 outbreak, as recent lockdowns in dozens of cities across the country shut factories and pummeled consumer spending. China's National Bureau of Statistics said Saturday that its official manufacturing purchasing managers index dropped to 47.4 in April, from 49.5 in March, falling to its lowest level since February 2020. The result fell short of the median forecast of 48.0 among economists polled by The Wall Street Journal, and well below the 50 mark that separates expansion from contraction. The subindex of factory production plummeted to 44.4 in April from 48.8 in March, the statistics bureau said. The sharp decline came as factories reduced or halted production due to the spreading virus, said Zhao Qinghe, a senior official at the statistics bureau.

https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-manufacturing-activity-contracted-further-in-april-11651285563?mod=newsview_er_click

South Africa says it may be entering fifth COVID wave

South Africa may be entering a fifth COVID wave earlier than expected after a sustained rise in infections over the past 14 days that seems to be driven by the BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron sub-variants, health officials and scientists said on Friday. The country that has recorded the most coronavirus cases and deaths on the African continent only exited a fourth wave around January and had predicted a fifth wave could start in May or June, early in the southern hemisphere winter.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/south-africa-may-be-entering-fifth-covid-wave-health-minister-2022-04-29/>