

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

29th Jun 2022

Lockdown Exit

Pfizer, Moderna to be ready with BA.1-specific COVID boosters

Pfizer Inc and Moderna Inc said on Tuesday they will be ready with COVID-19 vaccines designed to combat the BA.1 Omicron variant that was dominant last winter earlier than those designed to target currently dominant subvariants. Moderna said it would be ready with a "couple of hundred million" of bivalent vaccines designed to combat BA.1 by September, but it would be late October or early November if the vaccine maker needed to design a vaccine to combat the currently dominant BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/pfizer-moderna-be-ready-with-ba1-specific-covid-boosters-2022-06-28/>

What causes long COVID? Canadian researchers think they've found a key clue

Olympic gold medallist Alex Kopacz may be used to being out of breath when pushing a bobsled, but last year after he was hospitalized for COVID-19, he experienced a very different kind of breathlessness. He was put on oxygen for two months and experienced a number of other health setbacks in the months following his COVID-19 infection, including blood clots in his lungs and throughout his body. "It was hard to breathe and pretty much it was just going to be a matter of time to see if my body was going to heal from it," Kopacz said. It took him almost four months before he was back on his feet and breathing normally again. But without even an official diagnosis of so-called long COVID, the then-31-year-old didn't have answers about what was happening to him.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/8950820/long-covid-canadian-researchers-causes-study/>

Wimbledon reviews Covid-19 protocols after Berrettini is forced out by virus

Wimbledon's Covid-19 protocols are under review after Matteo Berrettini was forced to withdraw from Wimbledon on the morning of his first round match after testing positive for Covid-19. Berrettini, the No 8 seed, was one of the biggest contenders for the title having reached the Wimbledon final last year. After being out for nearly three months due to undergoing surgery on his finger, the Italian had returned at the beginning of the grass season and immediately won nine matches in a row, with titles in Stuttgart and Queen's.

<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2022/jun/28/wimbledon-reviews-covid-19-protocols-matteo-berrettini-withdraw-tennis>

Shanghai's Disneyland theme park to re-open on Thursday

The Walt Disney Co's Shanghai Disney Resort said on Tuesday it would reopen the Disneyland theme park on June 30, a month after the Chinese economic hub lifted a two month-long COVID-19 lockdown. The theme park has been shut since March 21, when the resort closed its doors amid an uptick of cases in Shanghai. The city lifted its lockdown on June 1 and the resort begun opening some areas just over a week later.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-disney-resort-says-reopen-disneyland-theme-park-june-30-2022-06-28/>

U.S. FDA advisers recommend inclusion of Omicron component for COVID boosters

Advisers to the U.S Food and Drug Administration on Tuesday overwhelmingly recommended the inclusion of an Omicron component for COVID-19 booster vaccines in the fall. The panel of advisers

voted 19-2 in favor of the recommendation.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/us-fda-advisers-recommend-inclusion-omicron-component-covid-boosters-2022-06-28/>

U.S. FDA classifies recall of GE's ventilator batteries as most serious

U.S. health regulators on Tuesday classified the recall of some backup batteries of GE Healthcare's ventilators, which the company had initiated in mid-April, as the most serious type, saying that their use could lead to injuries or death. The CARESCAPE R860 ventilator's backup batteries, including replacement backup batteries, were recalled as they were running out earlier-than-expected, which could cause the device to shut down preventing the patient from receiving breathing support, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-fda-classifies-recall-ge-ventilator-batteries-most-serious-2022-06-28/>

Omicron sub-variants BA.4, BA.5 make up more than 50% of U.S. COVID cases - CDC

The fast-spreading BA.4 and BA.5 sub-variants of Omicron are estimated to make up a combined 52% of the coronavirus cases in the United States as of June 25, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said on Tuesday. The two sublineages accounted for more than a third of U.S. cases for the week of June 18. They were added to the World Health Organization's monitoring list in March and designated as variants of concern by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/omicron-sub-variants-ba4-ba5-make-up-more-than-50-us-covid-cases-cdc-2022-06-28/>

Novartis to cut up to 8000 jobs globally

Novartis said on Tuesday a previously announced restructuring programme could lead to 8,000 jobs being cut, or about 7.4% of its global workforce, including up to 1,400 in Switzerland. The job cuts, previously projected by Chief Executive Vas Narasimhan to be in the "single digit thousands", are part of a restructuring programme the Swiss pharmaceutical group announced in April, targeting savings of at least \$1 billion by 2024.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/novartis-plans-cut-up-1400-jobs-switzerland-tagesanzeiger-2022-06-28/>

Pharma largely failed to follow human rights principles with its Covid-19 vaccines and drugs

More than two years after the Covid-19 pandemic emerged, a new scorecard finds that 19 of 26 pharmaceutical companies that marketed vaccines or therapeutics to contain the virus rank poorly when it came to complying with human rights principles. The rankings were compiled by examining actions taken to provide access to products, including commitments and measurable targets; transparency in disclosing R&D and production costs, and profits; the extent to which international cooperation was pursued and patents were enforced; and a willingness to provide fair pricing, equitable distribution, and technology transfers, among other things.

<https://www.statnews.com/pharmalot/2022/06/27/pharma-largely-failed-to-follow-human-rights-principles-with-its-covid-19-vaccines-and-drugs/>

Exit Strategies

Covid: 'Significantly' fewer primary pupils to be vaccinated

There has been a significant increase in the proportion of primary school parents who say they are "unlikely" to have their child vaccinated for Covid-19, a new survey has found. The figures have been published as experts warn the UK is experiencing a "fifth wave" of Covid, as infection rates climb, driven by new variants of Omicron. The latest data from the School Infection Survey (SIS) shows that the proportion of primary school pupils who were not vaccinated and whose parents said

they were “unlikely” to agree to their child being vaccinated in future has risen from 24 per cent in December 2021 to 36 per cent in March 2022.

<https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/covid-significantly-fewer-primary-pupils-be-vaccinated>

Amref and AstraZeneca launch clinics to support Kenyan COVID-19 vaccinations

The mobile clinics will support communities with limited or no access to vaccines and other health services. Amref Health Africa and AstraZeneca – in collaboration with the Ministry of Health in Kenya – are launching a fleet of mobile vaccination clinics in an effort to protect last-mile communities from the pandemic. Ten movable clinics will bring COVID-19 vaccines and other health services into hard-to-reach communities across Kenya, increasing vaccine access and general uptake in Kenya. As of June 2022, only 31.4% of the adult population in Kenya were fully vaccinated against COVID-19, while Africa’s average vaccination rate is 17.7%, lagging behind other world regions. Each mobile clinic aims to vaccinate 70-100 people every day – reaching up to 1,000 people per day, once all ten mobile clinics are fully operational.

https://www.pharmatimes.com/news/amref_and_astrazeneca_launch_clinics_to_support_kenyan_covid-19_vaccinations_1450636

EU countries prolong COVID-19 certificates amid rising cases

European Union countries approved Tuesday extending the use of COVID-19 certificates by one year until the end of June 2023 as cases of the deadly virus start to grow again ahead of the summer holiday season. Aimed at facilitating travel across the 27-nation bloc during the pandemic, the certificates entered into force in July last year and have been a successful tool to help EU citizens move in the region in coronavirus times without restrictions such as quarantines. EU countries have issued nearly 2 billion certificates. The document attests that a person has been vaccinated against coronavirus or that they have a recent negative test result or have recovered from the infection. The European Council said the regulation can be lifted earlier. But after most EU countries removed coronavirus restrictions over the past months in light of the improved health situation, a recent increase in infections fueled by new variants is leading governments to rethink their strategies.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-pandemics-european-union-council-a779b1b68af63a4bbf2bd758b08a1527>

Covid-19: Rise in cases prompts 'stay home if unwell' advice

People are asked to stay home if unwell because of suspected rises in Covid-19 cases. Health bosses in Devon and Cornwall say official data suggests between 2.2% and 2.7% of people in the counties have the virus. People are being reminded to protect themselves and others, and remember the virus "is very much still here"

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cz94r315y7zo>

France asks citizens to wear masks again in public transport

French people should start wearing masks again in crowded areas, especially in public transport, as France has to deal with a new wave of COVID-19 infections fuelled by new variants of the disease, Health Minister Brigitte Bourguignon said on Monday. "I'm not saying it should be mandatory but I do ask the French people to put the mask on in public transport," she told RTL, adding it was a "civic duty" to do so.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/france-asks-citizens-wear-masks-again-public-transport-2022-06-27/>

China reduces quarantine for people arriving from abroad

China on Tuesday announced an easing of its quarantine requirement for people arriving from abroad but stopped short of lifting what remains a stringent COVID-19 policy compared to most other countries. Anyone coming from outside the country will be required to stay in a quarantine hotel for seven days, followed by three days of home quarantine, the National Health Commission said in its latest pandemic response plan. The previous plan called for 14 days in a hotel plus seven days of home quarantine. Some cities, including Beijing, have already reduced the hotel requirement

to seven or 10 days in recent weeks, according to Chinese media reports. China has kept tight restrictions on international travel under a “zero-COVID” strategy that seeks to keep the virus out and stop any infections from spreading through lockdowns and mass testing.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-china-pandemics-ffc19abce41222e3fe03a99a22431cc1>

As COVID fears ebb, Japan readies for tourists from abroad

The rickshaw men in Tokyo are adding English-speaking staff, a sure sign Japan is bracing for a return of tourists from abroad. Japan’s border controls to curb the spread of coronavirus infections began gradually loosening earlier this month. That’s great news for Yusuke Otomo, owner of Daikichi, a kimono rental shop in Asakusa, an old district of Tokyo famous for its temples, quaint restaurants and rickshaw rides. He can barely contain his excitement. “Those were a hard three years. But we managed to endure until today. And after such an experience, to think people from abroad can finally come back is simply thrilling,” Otomo told The Associated Press.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-politics-travel-health-9e4e37e80074a49c00bbe69d3986806e>

Are pockets of Covid in the gut causing long-term symptoms?

Since the early days of the pandemic it has been clear some people shed genetic material from the virus in their stools for months after catching Covid-19. The findings were initially regarded as a curiosity, but there is mounting evidence to support the idea that persistent pockets of coronavirus – in the gut, or elsewhere – may be contributing to long Covid. Earlier this month, Prof David R Walt and colleagues at Harvard Medical School announced that they had detected Sars-CoV-2 proteins – most commonly the viral spike protein – in the blood of 65% of the long Covid patients they tested, up to 12 months after they were first diagnosed. Though small and preliminary, the study provides some of the most compelling evidence yet for the idea that reservoirs of the virus could be contributing to people’s long-term ill health. “The half-life of spike protein in the body is pretty short, so its presence indicates that there must be some kind of active viral reservoir,” Walt said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/jun/28/are-pockets-of-covid-in-the-gut-causing-long-term-symptoms>

Partisan Exits

Taiwanese drinks shop owners jailed for up to 7 months over social media posts calling on others to flout Hong Kong’s Covid-19 curbs

The owners of a Taiwanese drinks shop in Hong Kong have been jailed for up to seven months under a colonial-era sedition law for inciting others to flout public health curbs and refuse Covid-19 vaccines. A magistrate hand-picked by city leader Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor to oversee national security proceedings convicted the two women at West Kowloon Court on Tuesday upon their admission to a joint count of doing an act or acts with a seditious intent. Chinese University student Hau Wing-yan, 24, and Lam Yuen-yi, 21, were the administrators of an Instagram account for the now-defunct Ascohesion Cheese Tea shop in Mong Kok when nine posts criticising the government's anti-pandemic measures and vaccines were published on the platform between February 9 and 17 this year.

<https://www.msn.com/en-xl/news/other/taiwanese-drinks-shop-owners-jailed-for-up-to-7-months-over-social-media-posts-calling-on-others-to-flout-hong-kong-e2-80-99s-covid-19-curbs/ar-AAYXpIZ>

U.S. appeals court vacates federal vaccine mandate pending additional hearing

A U.S. appeals court panel said on Monday it would convene a full panel to reconsider President Joe Biden's executive order requiring civilian federal employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19, and set aside the order pending that hearing. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, which is based in New Orleans, had reinstated the vaccine order in April by a 2-1 vote after it was blocked by a district court judge in January.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-appeals-court-vacates-federal-vaccine-mandate-pending-additional-hearing-2022-06-27/>

Scientific Viewpoint

Korea's First Home-Grown COVID-19 Vaccine To Speed Hub Ambitions

Only one last step remains before the approval of South Korea's first home-grown COVID-19 vaccine as SK Bioscience's SKYCovione (GBP510) receives positive assessments from review committees. Any nod, which could happen this week, would mark a milestone for the country's ambitions of becoming a global vaccine hub.

<https://pink.pharmaintelligence.informa.com/PS146401/Koreas-First-Home-Grown-COVID-19-Vaccine-To-Speed-Hub-Ambitions>

Rare heart-related side effects higher with Moderna COVID vaccine

Though both complications were rare, data from Ontario show higher rates of myocarditis and pericarditis with the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine than with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, but the rates were lower for both vaccines if the spacing between receiving two doses was extended, according to a study late last week in JAMA Network Open. Myocarditis is an inflammation of the heart muscle, and pericarditis involves swelling of the thin membrane around the heart.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/06/rare-heart-related-side-effects-higher-moderna-covid-vaccine>

India's first indigenous mRNA vaccine likely to be available soon

Soon India may have its first indigenous mRNA vaccine that is stable at 2-8 degrees Celsius as the expert panel advising the Central Drugs Standards Control Organisation (CDSCO) has green-signalled Genovax Biopharma's mRNA vaccine candidate for Covid19. The Subject Expert Committee (SEC) has recommended granting the Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) to the country's first mRNA-based Covid-19 vaccine in a meeting held on Friday, according to reports. Now, the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) will take a final call on granting the final approval.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-s-first-indigenous-mrna-vaccine-likely-to-be-available-soon-122062800285_1.html

COVID was twice as deadly in poorer countries

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, the risk of dying from the disease was roughly twice as high for people living in lower-income countries as for those in rich nations, a study reports. The research, published in BMJ Global Health in May1, is one of a growing number of studies to reveal COVID-19's massive burden in lower-income countries. Data from early in the pandemic suggested that death and infection rates in poor countries were relatively low compared with those in rich ones. But recent evidence paints a very different picture, says Madhukar Pai, an infectious-disease epidemiologist at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. "This paper is one among many that illustrate that the biggest impact of this pandemic has been on low- and middle-income countries," says Pai.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-01767-z>

In 1st year of pandemic, COVID vaccines saved 20M lives

Based on official data on COVID-19 deaths, the authors estimated that vaccinations prevented 14.4 million deaths in 185 countries and territories during the one-year study duration. Based on excess mortality estimates, they observed that vaccinations halved the potential global death toll and averted around 19.8 million deaths in a year. The latter represents the true extent of the first year of the pandemic, showing a global reduction of 63% in total deaths due to vaccination.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20220628/In-1st-year-of-pandemic-COVID-vaccines-saved-20M-lives.aspx>

Fast-evolving COVID variants complicate vaccine updates

As countries brace for another Omicron wave driven by the variants BA.4 and BA.5, calls to update COVID-19 vaccines are growing louder. Existing vaccines based on the version of the virus SARS-CoV-2 that emerged in Wuhan, China, in late 2019 are a poor match to current Omicron strains. As a

result, the vaccines now offer only short-lived protection from infection — although they seem to be holding up against severe disease. This week, an advisory panel to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will meet to discuss whether COVID-19 vaccines should be updated — and what the upgraded vaccines should look like.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-01771-3>

EnGeneIC's second generation COVID-19 vaccine protects against all variants

The world's first COVID-19 vaccine to offer immunity against all variants is one step closer. Clinical trials have shown the novel vaccine works by stimulating a completely different immune pathway from other vaccines, producing "high affinity" antibodies that neutralise all COVID-19 variants. Australian Biopharma company EnGeneIC is currently conducting trials of its groundbreaking vaccine in Sydney and Melbourne. Thirty-two healthy participants received two doses, three weeks apart. Of those, 27 have passed the 28-day safety assessment with no side effects. Critically, they all have high affinity antibodies capable of neutralising all COVID-19 mutants, including Omicron.

<https://apnews.com/press-release/globe-newswire/covid-technology-health-clinical-trials-sydney-41d8fa4cc4581d7da4f76a19c7784972>

How do I know if I've had COVID-19, and what else can antibody blood tests tell us about past infection?

Antibody blood tests can tell you if you've had COVID-19, but there are some caveats. COVID-19 antibodies naturally dwindle over time, so if they turn up in your blood test, their levels can't tell you exactly how long ago you were infected — just that you were infected sometime in the past few months. "We think now [the test] is a useful marker of fairly recent infection, as opposed to whether you've ever been infected," Dr Machalek says.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/health/2022-06-28/covid-virus-antibody-laboratory-blood-test-past-infection/101150468>

Majority of secondary school children have Covid-19 antibodies, says new data

Nearly all secondary school-age children have Covid-19 antibodies, according to new data. Data from the School Infection Survey, which was released on Monday, revealed that numbers of primary school parents who would be "unlikely" to vaccinate their children has increased. The news comes as levels of Covid continue to rise in the UK, with new cases likely due to variants of the Omicron strain. In the last week, an estimated 1.7million people are reported to have had the virus, up 23% from 1.4 million the previous week.

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/lifestyle/majority-children-covid-19-antibodies-27341902>

COVID-19 fattens up our body's cells to help fuel its viral takeover, study suggests

Researchers tried using weight-loss drugs and other fat-targeting compounds to try to stop the virus in cell culture. The new study comes as infections rose in all four UK nations, with about 1.7 million having the virus last week.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-fattens-up-our-bodys-cells-to-help-fuel-its-viral-takeover-study-suggests-12641683>

Improving COVID-19 vaccine immunogenicity by interrupting methotrexate treatment

In summary, this important study shows that a 2-week interruption of methotrexate after booster COVID-19 vaccination results in increased immunogenicity compared with no interruption among patients with several immune-mediated inflammatory diseases. Although this finding adds to the evidence base to support interruption of methotrexate after vaccination, a shared decision process is needed to weigh the possible benefit of optimising protection from COVID-19 and the possible risk of underlying disease flare.

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600\(22\)00224-7/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600(22)00224-7/fulltext)

U.S. FDA will decide on redesigned COVID vaccines by early July

U.S. regulators plan to decide by early July whether to change the design of COVID-19 vaccines this fall in order to combat more recent variants of the coronavirus, with hopes of launching a booster campaign by October, a top Food and Drug Administration official said on Tuesday. "The better the match of the vaccines to the circulating strain we believe may correspond to improve vaccine effectiveness, and potentially to a better durability of protection," Dr. Peter Marks, director of the FDA's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research, said at a meeting of outside expert advisers to the agency.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/us-fda-advisers-meet-discuss-design-future-covid-vaccines-2022-06-28/>

Are Updated Booster Shots Coming?

Tomorrow will be a big day for the future of U.S. coronavirus vaccines: A panel of independent advisers to the F.D.A. will recommend whether to update the existing vaccines to take aim at a version of the virus in the Omicron family. The advisory panel also will probably split between those who believe a fall booster will be broadly necessary and those who would limit additional shots to high-risk individuals. The policy may depend on funding and resources. "It's very clear we're not going to have enough vaccines for every adult who wants one," said Dr. Ashish Jha, the White House coordinator for the pandemic response.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/27/briefing/booster-fda-omicron-coronavirus.html>

AstraZeneca launches first Evusheld DTC, but without full approval it comes with a different feel

AstraZeneca launched the first ever COVID drug DTC for its prevention antibody, Evusheld, and it's one of the most unusual and unique commercials you will see this year. The ad, which is set up more as a public health announcement (though is heavily branded), has a very different feel from most traditional pharma DTCs. There are no bright colors or emotional beats. You won't find someone roller skating around a park, for instance, or someone running with their dog. What you get instead is just one narrator, standing in a bland, empty, white office space, laying out informatively how Evusheld works, who it's for and, instead of waiting for the end of the ad, explaining many of the potential side effects in the middle of the video.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/marketing/astrazeneca-launches-first-evusheld-dtc-without-full-approval-it-comes-different-feel>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Covid-19 deaths remain low while infections and hospital numbers rise

The number of Covid-19 deaths registered in England and Wales continues to remain low, with no evidence yet of the impact of the latest rise in infections. A total of 264 deaths registered in the seven days to June 17 mentioned coronavirus on the death certificate, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This is down slightly from 284 deaths in the previous week and remains well below the 1,125 recorded in the peak week of the Omicron BA.2 wave of infections earlier in the year.

<https://www.southwalesguardian.co.uk/news/20240010.covid-19-deaths-remain-low-infections-hospital-numbers-rise/>

Singapore reports 11504 new COVID-19 cases, highest daily number of infections in more than 3 months

Singapore reported 11,504 new COVID-19 cases as of noon on Tuesday (Jun 28), comprising 10,732 local infections and 772 imported cases. There was one fatality, taking the death toll from coronavirus complications to 1,410. Cases tend to increase on Tuesdays, with Health Minister Ong Ye Kung previously referring to such a pattern, writing on Facebook in October 2021 that numbers would "always spike after the weekends". The last time Singapore reported more daily infections than Tuesday was on Mar 22, when 13,166 COVID-19 new cases were reported.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/new-covid-19-cases-deaths-hospital-infection-ratio-moh-2775281>

Covid pandemic not over warns Northamptonshire health experts

Health experts have warned the Covid-19 pandemic "isn't over", as a county saw cases rise by 20% in a week and an increase in people going to hospital. In the week to 22 June, Northamptonshire has 886 cases, up from 736 in the previous week. The county's two councils said two new subvariants of Omicron appeared to be more infectious than other variants. Sally Burns, interim director of Public Health for West Northamptonshire, said people should "take precautions". Both North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire councils said there was an increase in hospital admissions from the rise in cases. Northampton General has 16 people in hospital with Covid-19 - an increase from 13 in the previous week, and Kettering General has 21 in hospital - a rise from 17.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-northamptonshire-61957325>

Ireland puts army on standby to help at Dublin airport amid COVID surge

Ireland agreed on Tuesday to put the army on standby to help with security at Dublin airport should staffing be hit by a resurgence of COVID-19 during the rest of the busy summer travel period. Ireland's main airport is one of many around Europe that has struggled to hire staff fast enough to deal with a sharp rebound in travel, although it has had relatively few issues since more than 1,000 passengers missed their flights in a single day last month.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ireland-puts-army-standby-help-dublin-airport-amid-covid-surge-2022-06-28/>