

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

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Lockdown Exit

Easing of Covid-19 travel restrictions in S'pore could lead to uptick in flu cases, doctors warn

People should take their flu jabs to protect against concurrent infection of both Covid-19 and the flu, which can lead to severe disease, doctors have advised. This is especially important as Singapore continues to ease its travel restrictions and opens up its borders, they said, adding that influenza cases can be expected to rise. With the new vaccinated travel lanes, more people here will be travelling abroad during the northern winter that typically sees countries there experiencing a spike in flu cases.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/easing-of-covid-19-travel-restrictions-in-spore-could-lead-to-uptick-in-flu-cases-doctors>

Australia, Israel share notes on pandemic

NSW Chief Health Officer Kerry Chant will lead a team of delegates to Israel next month for a high-level information exchange on managing the COVID-19 pandemic. Fifteen Australian public health experts and clinicians will meet with counterparts from Israel's health and foreign affairs ministries along with leading academics to discuss ongoing handling of the viral disease.

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/7865533/australia-israel-share-notes-on-pandemic/>

U.S. CDC plans to focus on public health response after pandemic failings

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said it will prioritize its public health response in a revamp of its structure after months of criticism over its handling of the COVID-19 and monkeypox pandemics. A briefing document provided by the agency on Wednesday said an external report into its response found public guidance had caused confusion, while important information were sometimes released too late to inform federal decisions

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/cdc-plans-reorganize-structure-after-pandemic-related-criticism-wsj-2022-08-17/>

CDC Director Outlines Restructuring Plans

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will be restructured to strengthen its response to public-health threats, the agency's director said, acknowledging shortcomings in its fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said Wednesday that she intended to improve the agency's communication, timeliness and accountability. The CDC has at times amended its guidance on masking, isolation and other mitigation efforts in ways that spurred confusion or lagged behind the trajectory of the pandemic. The agency has faced new criticism recently for its response to the monkeypox outbreak. "In our big moment, our performance did not reliably meet expectations," Dr. Walensky said. "I want us all to do better, and it starts with CDC leading the way."

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/cdc-director-outlines-restructuring-plans-11660752027>

Covid vaccine volunteer army set for autumn rollout return as thousands of extra helpers sought

Thousands of extra volunteer vaccination staff will be recruited across the country to assist with the autumn booster rollout. St John Ambulance said it was looking for around 5,000 volunteers to help meet demand and is already training hundreds of people ahead of the booster campaign starting next month. It played a leading role in the delivery of the initial Covid vaccination campaign and is now stepping up its resources as it anticipates a surge in demand over autumn and winter.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/covid-vaccine-volunteer-army-return-autumn-jab-rollout-1799127>

New York City Department of Education relaxes COVID-19 rules for public schools

The New York City Department of Education will no longer randomly test students for COVID-19 when the new school year begins Sept. 8, the department said Tuesday. Instead, test kits will be sent home for students, parents and teachers to use if they are exposed to the virus. As part of the department's new COVID-19 protocols, students will no longer be required to submit a daily health screening form.

<https://abcnews.go.com/US/york-city-department-education-relaxes-covid-19-rules/story?id=88459900>

The end of quarantine? What people should know about the CDC's new Covid-19 guidelines

Last week, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced key changes to its nationwide Covid-19 guidelines. Among them was the end of required quarantine after someone is exposed to a close contact with the coronavirus. The CDC also revised isolation guidance for people infected with Covid-19. With the required quarantine ending, what should people do if they've been exposed? How long should they isolate if they do get infected? What's the rationale for making the changes? And are there exceptions—who should take precautions above and beyond the new recommendations? To guide us through the changes, I spoke with CNN Medical Analyst Dr. Leana Wen, an emergency physician and professor of health policy and management at the George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/17/health/coronavirus-omicron-isolation-quarantine-vaccine-wellness/index.html>

A complicated fall vaccine campaign: Updated Covid boosters, flu shots, and how to time the jabs

For the health officials who steer vaccination campaigns, it's going to be a complicated fall. The U.S. plan to roll out updated Covid-19 boosters will not only coincide with the logistical tangle of the regular flu shot drive, but will also face questions about when people should get the new shots to provide themselves with the best protection through our third Covid winter. It's a balancing act that health officials run into every year with flu. Vaccinating tens of millions of people takes weeks. People also need a few weeks after their shot for their immune systems to be fully primed. And yet, vaccinators don't want to put shots in arms too early, either.

<https://www.statnews.com/2022/08/16/a-complicated-fall-vaccine-campaign-updated-covid-boosters-flu-shots-and-how-to-time-the-jabs/>

Exit Strategies

Thailand health ministry to further downgrade COVID-19, reduce days for treatment

The Public Health Ministry of Thailand will ask the Center for Covid-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) to downgrade the status of the disease at its next meeting expected on

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1648340/thailand-health-ministry-to-further-downgrade-covid-19-reduce-days-for-treatment/>

Experts warn Omicron vaccine booster rollout will be slowed by Covid complacency, putting vulnerable at risk

Scientists fear complacency and Covid fatigue will reduce take-up the autumn booster campaign, putting the most vulnerable at greater risk of hospitalisation and death. Those people who are over 50 or clinically vulnerable will be offered a booster jab that has been specifically designed to tackle Omicron after the regulator gave Moderna's new vaccine the green light on Monday. But there are fears that, with many people having had Covid at least once and surviving, and a high level of pandemic fatigue, the rate of take-up will be markedly lower higher than in previous booster campaigns.

https://inews.co.uk/news/science/omicron-autumn-booster-campaign-covid-complacency-vulnerable-risk-1798296?ico=editors_picks

Covid jabs will have to be tweaked annually like flu until universal vaccine is discovered

Covid vaccines are likely to become like influenza jabs, that are tweaked every year and offered to vulnerable people every autumn, according to a leading vaccine developer. Professor Robin Shattock of Imperial College London says "there are two approaches to next generation vaccines"; the annual flu jab approach and the Holy Grail of the one-vaccine-fits-all-variants approach. "In the same way that the influenza vaccine is updated every year and given to the vulnerable population, an annual vaccine could be given for Covid as well," said Professor Shattock, a pioneer of the same RNA vaccine technology that is used by the Moderna and Pfizer jabs.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/science/universal-covid-jab-tweaked-annually-flu-vaccine-1798687>

No plans for UK to order more supplies of AstraZeneca Covid vaccine

There are no plans to order further supplies of the Oxford/AstraZeneca Covid vaccine for the UK, it has been revealed, as experts expressed hope that a new jab designed to target two variants will form the backbone of the autumn booster programme. Deemed a British success story, and estimated to have saved millions of lives worldwide, the Oxford/AstraZeneca Covid jab played a key role early in the UK's vaccination programme. But Prof Anthony Harnden, the deputy chair of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), has suggested it is unlikely to be used in the future.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/aug/16/no-plans-for-uk-to-order-more-supplies-of-astrazeneca-covid-vaccine>

Quebec will offer 5th dose of COVID-19 vaccine to all adults as of Aug. 29

With the upcoming school year and the return to work looming for many Quebecers, the province is launching a new COVID-19 vaccination campaign. In his first appearance at a COVID-19 news conference in six months, Premier François Legault said life is almost back to normal thanks to the vaccine. He's urging people who have not had a dose in the past five months or more to get another shot. "More people will be inside, there will be more contagion," Legault said. "So it's a really good time to be launching a massive vaccination campaign."

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-vaccination-campaign-fifth-doses-1.6552374>

Wear masks on trains and buses and give every adult a Covid booster, says Tony Blair

The UK Government must be prepared to bring back compulsory masks on public transport in order to stop a significant winter wave of Covid-19, Tony Blair has warned. The former Prime Minister's think tank, the Tony Blair Institute, called for a booster vaccine to be offered to every British adult over the autumn as part of its plan to avoid a meltdown of the NHS. Millions of people are on waiting lists while A&E waiting times are near an all-time high, according to the institute. In a new paper, a panel of doctors and other experts warns: "This winter will bring a perfect storm, resulting in unprecedented demand and reduced capacity, which will combine to create the worst winter crisis in the NHS's history."

<https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/reintroduce-masks-public-transport-booster-covid-tony-blair-1798445>

BMA raises 'serious concerns' about GP workload and funding for autumn COVID boosters

The BMA has raised 'serious concerns' about the workload implications of this autumn's COVID-19 booster programme and argued that practices will be underpaid for the work they are doing.

<https://www.gponline.com/bma-raises-serious-concerns-gp-workload-funding-autumn-covid-boosters/article/1795941>

WHO releases interim statement on COVID-19 vaccination for children and adolescents

The World Health Organization (WHO), with the support of the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE), has released an interim statement on the role of COVID-19 vaccines in children and

adolescents in the context of the continuing global disparities in vaccination. In the statement, it is concluded that before considering implementing primary vaccination series in children and adolescents, attaining high coverage of primary series – and booster doses as needed – in highest and high-priority-use groups must be pursued. WHO refers to the global inequity in vaccine rollout, with only 25% of older populations having received a complete primary series of COVID-19 vaccines in lower income countries – the very places where healthcare access is more limited.

https://www.pmlive.com/pharma_news/who_releases_interim_statement_on_covid-19_vaccination_for_children_and_adolescents_1453440

Biden administration will stop buying Covid-19 vaccines, treatments and tests as early as this fall, Jha says

The Biden administration has been planning for how to get past the crisis phase of the Covid-19 pandemic and will stop buying vaccines, treatments and tests as early as this fall, White House Covid-19 Response Coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha said on Tuesday. "One of the things we've spent a lot of time thinking about in the last many months -- and we're going to continue this work, and you'll hear more from the administration on this -- is getting us out of that acute emergency phase where the US government is buying the vaccines, buying the treatments, buying the diagnostic tests," Jha said at an event sponsored by the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/16/health/biden-administration-covid-19-vaccines-tests-treatments/index.html>

Partisan Exits

The Morrison government's COVID-19 vaccine rollout missed key targets, major review finds

An auditor-general's report has criticised the previous coalition government's COVID-19 vaccine rollout for missing key targets. The report said while about 90 per cent of the eligible population were vaccinated by the end of 2021, the rollout was not implemented effectively. None of the five timeline targets set by the government were met, including the rollouts to aged care, the vulnerable and Indigenous people.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/the-morrison-governments-covid-19-vaccine-rollout-missed-key-targets-major-review-finds/grn8rekbg>

Morrison government failed to provide priority for at-risk groups in vaccine rollout, report says

The Morrison government botched the early planning of Australia's Covid vaccine rollout, failing to provide priority for at-risk groups including aged and disability care, and First Nations people, according to a new report. The Australian National Audit Office report, released on Thursday, criticised the previous administration for not beginning to plan the rollout with states and territories until November 2020. It recommended a more comprehensive review and will likely fuel calls for a Covid-19 royal commission. The health minister, Mark Butler, seized on the findings, which he said confirmed "for much of 2021, Australia had one of the slowest vaccine rollouts in the developed world".

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/17/morrison-government-failed-to-provide-priority-for-at-risk-groups-in-vaccine-rollout-report-says>

California appeals court rejects COVID-19 fines for church

A California church that defied safety regulations during the COVID-19 pandemic by holding large religious services won't have to pay about \$200,000 in fines, a state appeals court ruled. Calvary Chapel San Jose and its pastors were held in contempt of court and fined in 2020 and 2021 for violating state and county limits on indoor public gatherings. The rules were aimed at preventing the spread through close contact of the virus, which has caused more than 10 million confirmed cases and more than 93,500 deaths since the pandemic began in mid-2020, according to state public

health figures.

<https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/california-appeals-court-rejects-covid-19-fines-church-88468639>

Senior doctor tells Newmarch House COVID-19 inquest of his 'crisis day' as the nursing home outbreak unfolded

19 residents died during the COVID-19 outbreak at Newmarch House. A three-week inquest into the circumstances surrounding the deaths has concluded, with findings due early next year. Lawyer Emily Clarke says Anglicare should have taken control of the situation as the operator of the home

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-08-17/newmarch-house-covid19-inquest-hears-of-senior-doctor-crisis-day/101341102>

Planning for COVID-19 vaccine rollout left too late, Commonwealth failed to adequately engage states, damning review finds

A review by the Auditor-General found the Coalition left planning for Australia's COVID vaccine rollout too late. It also found the former Morrison government failed to adequately engage with the states and territories before the rollout began. The Department of Health has agreed to the recommendations.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-08-17/planning-for-covid-rollout-left-too-late-review-finds/101344530>

Scientific Viewpoint

Another tantalizing step closer to a universal flu vaccine

Most circulating in birds are also influenza A viruses, and no one knows if—or when—one of them will jump the species barrier. Developing a universal vaccine that targets A strains of flu viruses would be a scientific godsend, global health experts say. "Influenza A viruses present major public health threats," writes Dr. Jaekeun Park of the Viral Pathogenesis and Evolution section of the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-08-tantalizing-closer-universal-flu-vaccine.html>

Regulators in Britain approve new COVID-19 vaccine booster

Regulators in Britain are the first in the world to approve a COVID-19 vaccine booster that targets two coronavirus variants. Tina Kraus reports for CBS2.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/video/regulators-in-britain-approve-new-covid-19-vaccine-booster/>

JCVI publishes advice on COVID-19 vaccines ahead of autumn booster campaign

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has published its advice on which COVID-19 vaccines should be used in this year's autumn booster programme. For adults aged 18 years and above, the JCVI's advised vaccines include Moderna's mRNA (Spikevax) bivalent Omicron BA.1/original wild-type vaccine, as well as its mRNA (Spikevax) original wild-type vaccine. The Pfizer/BioNTech mRNA (Comirnaty) original wild-type vaccine is also advised, and in exceptional circumstances, the Novavax Matrix-M adjuvanted wild-type vaccine (Nuvaxovid) when 'no alternative clinically suitable UK-approved COVID-19 vaccine is available,' the JCVI stated. The Pfizer/BioNTech mRNA (Comirnaty) original wild-type vaccine is the only vaccine the JCVI advises for people aged 12 to 17 years, and its paediatric formulation is the only advised for those aged five to 11 years old.

https://www.pmlive.com/pharma_news/jcvi_publishes_advice_on_covid-19_vaccines_ahead_of_autumn_booster_campaign_1453481

BCG vaccine can protect against Covid, new report finds

The world may have another tool with which to fight the effects of the Covid-19 virus. A new study published in Cell Medicine Reports has found that the Bacillus-Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccine, developed to help fight tuberculosis in the early 1900s, may offer a measure of protection against Covid and a range of other infectious diseases and bacteria by strengthening the immune system.

The study in question began before the first Covid outbreak in the United States, back in January 2020. It was designed to see whether BCG vaccinations could help people with Type 1 diabetes resist infections - including, ultimately, Covid.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/bcg-vaccine-covid-protection-reporter-b2146411.html>

Novavax Nuvaxovid™ COVID-19 Vaccine Granted Expanded Provisional Approval in New Zealand as a First and Second Booster for Adults

Following the expanded provisional approval decision by Medsafe, New Zealand, people may now choose Nuvaxovid as their first and/or second COVID-19 booster dose(s) after completion of their primary series using any of the authorized COVID-19 vaccines. "We are pleased to offer another booster choice and the only protein-based COVID-19 vaccine for those aged 18 and older in New Zealand," said Stanley C. Erck, President and Chief Executive Officer, Novavax. "As New Zealand endures winter months where thousands of COVID-19 infections are being recorded each day, we believe our vaccine is a strong option, particularly given its broad immune responses to a wide range of circulating variants."

<https://apnews.com/press-release/pr-newswire/covid-technology-health-infectious-diseases-immunizations-28498c286d55172cc2867cbd6b086a30>

Novavax asks FDA for emergency authorization of its COVID-19 booster

Novavax has submitted an application to the Food and Drug Administration for Emergency Use Authorization of its COVID-19 vaccine as a booster in adults that can be used on top of its primary vaccine series or to mix and match with a different primary series, the company announced. "It's important for people to have a choice as they evaluate how to stay protected against COVID-19, and boosters are an invaluable tool to build upon immunity obtained from previous vaccinations," Stanley C. Erck, President and Chief Executive Officer of Novavax, said in a statement on Monday. "Based on the data presented to the FDA's VRBPAC and the CDC ACIP, we believe our vaccine offers a broad, long-lasting immune response against a range of variants," Erck said.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/novavax-asks-fda-for-emergency-authorization-of-its-covid-19-booster/ar-AA10Jxb0>

Nearly 14 mn US kids infected with Covid-19 since onset of pandemic

Nearly 14 million children in the US have tested positive for Covid-19 since the onset of the pandemic in early 2020, according to the latest report by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Children's Hospital Association. Almost 371,000 of these cases have been added in the past four weeks, Xinhua news agency quoted the report as saying. Approximately 6.4 million reported cases have been added in 2022, it said. For the week ending August 11, almost 87,000 child Covid cases were reported. There is an urgent need to collect more age-specific data to assess the severity of illness related to new variants as well as potential longer-term effects, said the AAP.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/nearly-14-mn-us-kids-infected-with-covid-19-since-onset-of-pandemic-122081700290_1.html

Hypertension remains a significant risk factor for severe COVID-19 in fully vaccinated

The presence of hypertension still poses a significant risk factor for more severe disease in COVID-19, even among those fully vaccinated. Patients with hypertension even after receipt of three COVID-19 vaccination doses, remain at an elevated risk of severe breakthrough infections with the Omicron variant according to researchers from the Department of Cardiology, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles, US. Although full vaccination against COVID-19 initially required individuals to have two doses, the fact that immunity appears to wane over time has led to a recommendation for a third dose. In fact, a third dose appears to provide greater protection with data showing how a third dose of the BNT162b2 vaccine administered a median of 10.8 months after the second dose provided 95.3% efficacy against COVID-19 compared with two doses.

<https://hospitalhealthcare.com/clinical/cardiovascular/hypertension-remains-significant-risk-factor-for-severe-covid-19-in-fully-vaccinated/>

When COVID-19 or flu viruses kill, they often have an accomplice - bacterial infections

The 1918 influenza pandemic resulted in the loss of over 3% of the world's population - at least 50 million people. But it wasn't the flu virus that caused the majority of these deaths. An analysis of lung samples collected during that flu pandemic indicated that most of the deaths were likely due to bacterial pneumonia, which ran rampant in the absence of antibiotics. Even in more recent history, like the 1957 H2N2 and 2009 H1N1 flu pandemics, nearly 18% of patients with viral pneumonia had additional bacterial infections that increased their risk of death. And the COVID-19 pandemic is no different.

<https://theconversation.com/when-covid-19-or-flu-viruses-kill-they-often-have-an-accomplice-bacterial-infections-187056>

Higher risk of vein blood clots in COVID vs flu patients

Hospitalized adult COVID-19 patients before and after SARS-CoV-2 vaccine availability had significantly higher odds of venous—but not arterial—thromboembolism than those hospitalized for influenza before the pandemic, finds a study published today in JAMA. A team led by University of Pennsylvania researchers retrospectively studied rates of venous thromboembolism (blood clot in a vein) and arterial thromboembolism (blood clot in an artery) in 41,443 COVID-19 patients hospitalized before the vaccine rollout (April to November 2020), 44,194 COVID-19 patients admitted after vaccines became available (December 2020 to May 2021), and 8,269 patients hospitalized with the flu from October 2018 to April 2019. Thromboembolism can cause blockage of a blood vessel and thus can be severe.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/08/higher-risk-vein-blood-clots-covid-vs-flu-patients>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Two test positive for COVID-19 after traveling back to Shanghai

Shanghai reported two COVID-19 community infections on Wednesday, both asymptomatic cases who traveled back from other Chinese provinces recently. The 33-year-old female, who lives in downtown Huangpu District, had traveled to southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region. The other case, a 27-year-old male truck driver from Hongkou District, returned from a self-driving tour outside Shanghai on Sunday. "Apart from the cases related to a foot massage parlor in Xuhui (District), most local infections reported recently had traveled to other provinces or cities," said Zhao Dandan, deputy director of the Shanghai Health Commission.

<https://www.shine.cn/news/metro/2208179326/>

Covid 19 coronavirus: How many Kiwis haven't had the virus?

One year on from the day New Zealand forever left the Covid-free comfort of Level 1, a modeller says Kiwis who haven't yet caught the virus are now a minority. But without a nationwide infection prevalence survey - soon to be launched by the Ministry of Health - it remains unclear just how many Kiwis have been exposed to Covid-19. As at today, the official case tally stood at 1,696,239 - that's a third of our resident population - of which just 28,775 were probable reinfections. But as Professor Michael Plank, of Covid-19 Modelling Aotearoa, pointed out, these were only those cases that had been notified after people got themselves tested and reported their results. "The proportion of infections that are reported is probably somewhere between 40 per cent and 65 per cent," Plank said.

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/covid-19-coronavirus-how-many-kiwis-havent-had-the-virus/UXNWJCAMRQAGE3575QVCLBPFEE/>

COVID-19 levels remain high in Ottawa as indicators decline

While many of the key indicators of COVID-19 levels in Ottawa have dropped, public health officials say levels remain high in the community. Ottawa Public Health (OPH) says the local vaccination rate of children under five is among the highest in the province. Earlier this month, the province's chief medical officer of health said the seventh wave of COVID-19 in Ontario had peaked. Health officials say the current wave is driven by the BA.5 coronavirus subvariant, and is again straining a health-care system already stretched thin by staff shortages.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/covid19-ottawa-cases-aug-16-2022-1.6553088>

Russia's daily COVID cases cross 30000 for first time since mid-March

Russia reported 33,106 new daily coronavirus cases on Wednesday, authorities said, the highest figure since mid-March this year. Sixty-three people in Russia died of coronavirus over the past day, the country's taskforce against the virus said. Russia said in early July that it was ending all restrictions to combat the spread of COVID-19, including the requirement to wear masks, citing a steady decline in deaths from the virus.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/russias-daily-covid-cases-cross-30000-first-time-since-mid-march-2022-08-17/>

China reports 3036 new COVID cases for Aug 16 vs 2526 day earlier

China reported 3,036 new coronavirus cases for Aug. 16, of which 637 were symptomatic and 2,399 were asymptomatic, the National Health Commission said on Wednesday. That compared with 2,526 new cases a day earlier - 591 symptomatic and 1,935 asymptomatic infections, which China counts separately. There were no new deaths, leaving the nation's death count at 5,226. As of Aug. 16, mainland China had confirmed 236,898 cases with symptoms.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-reports-3036-new-covid-cases-aug-16-vs-2526-day-earlier-2022-08-17/>