

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

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Lockdown Exit

Rise in Cases and Deaths Tests Britain's Gamble on Few Virus Restrictions

For the last four months, Britain has run a grand epidemiological experiment, lifting virtually all coronavirus restrictions, even in the face of a high daily rate of infections. Its leaders justified the approach on the grounds that the country's rapid rollout of vaccines had weakened the link between infection and serious illness. Now, with cases, hospital admissions and deaths all rising again; the effect of vaccines beginning to wear off; and winter looming, Britain's strategy of learning to live with the virus is coming under its stiffest test yet. New cases surpassed 50,000 on Thursday, an 18 percent increase over the last week and the second time cases have broken that psychological barrier since July. The number of people admitted to hospitals rose 15.4 percent over the same period, reaching 959, while 115 people died of Covid-19, an increase of almost 11 percent.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/21/world/europe/britain-virus.html>

COVID-19: Health minister denies existence of Plan C to ban Christmas household mixing

A health minister has denied there is a "plan C" to control COVID-19 by restricting household gatherings in England at Christmas if hospital admissions get worse. Edward Argar told Sky News it is "not something I'm aware of" after reports claimed Whitehall officials are considering not allowing members of different households to meet in each other's homes - as was the case most of last year. The plan, the reports said, would be imposed if COVID-19 cases continue to rise towards Christmas and the government would want to minimise the economic impact by keeping shops, pubs and restaurants open.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-health-minister-denies-existence-of-plan-c-to-ban-christmas-household-mixing-1>

[2439919](#)

NHS Wales chief executive on Covid-19, winter, and whether restrictions could be reintroduced

The chief executive of the Welsh NHS has laid bare the significant challenges facing the health and social care system this winter. Dr Andrew Goodall, who is set to leave his role at the end of October, said the coming months could prove to be the most difficult in the careers of many frontline staff. His comments come following the publication of the NHS winter plan which focuses on protecting people against Covid-19 and other respiratory viruses while trying to cope with mounting demand for elective and emergency care. We sat down with Dr Goodall at the Welsh Government's offices in Cathays Park to talk about some of the biggest issues facing the Welsh NHS and how the plan will help.

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/health/nhs-wales-chief-executive-covid-21915287>

Melbourne readies to exit world's longest COVID-19 lockdown

Millions in Melbourne are readying to come out of the world's longest COVID-19 lockdown later on Thursday even as cases hover near record levels, with pubs, restaurants and cafes rushing to restock supplies before opening their doors. Since early August, residents in Australia's second-largest city have been in lockdown - their sixth during the pandemic - to quell an outbreak fuelled by the highly infectious Delta strain.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/melbourne-readies-exit-worlds-longest-covid-19-lockdowns-2021-10-20/>

WHO estimate: 115,000 health workers have died from Covid-19, as calls for vaccine access grow

Some 115,000 health care workers died from Covid-19 from January 2020 to May of this year, according to a new World Health Organization estimate, as the agency pushed once again for efforts to address vaccine inequity. Globally, 2 in 5 health care workers are fully vaccinated, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said at a briefing Thursday. But, he added, "that average masks huge differences across regions and economic groupings." In most high-income countries, more than 80% of health care workers are fully vaccinated, Tedros said. But in Africa, the rate is less than 1 in 10. "The backbone of every health system is its workforce — the people who deliver the services on which we rely at some point in our lives," Tedros said. "The pandemic is a powerful demonstration of just how much we rely on health workers and how vulnerable we all are when the people who protect our health are themselves unprotected."

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/10/21/who-estimate-115000-health-workers-have-died-from-covid-19-as-calls-for-vaccine-access-grow/>

Covid-19 Herd Immunity Proves Elusive in U.K.

The U.K., in an experiment watched by the world, lifted most Covid-19 restrictions in the summer, wagering that immunity from vaccinations and prior infections would keep the virus at bay. Three months later, the British experience shows that, in the face of the highly transmissible Delta variant of the coronavirus, herd immunity is elusive. Covid-19 cases and deaths have risen in recent weeks as winter has begun to close in. The bottom line: Reliance on immunity, which is imperfect to begin with and wanes over time, doesn't guarantee a quick victory over Delta. Lifting restrictions "was done on the hope that the vaccinations and natural immunity were going to win pretty quickly," said Tim Spector, professor of genetic epidemiology at King's College London. "What it's shown is that that alone doesn't work."

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-herd-immunity-proves-elusive-in-u-k-11634810364>

Exit Strategies

Pharmacists call to be involved in Covid-19 booster vaccine rollout

The chief medical officer Dr Tony Holohan has said that there are no plans to extend the vaccine booster programme to the under-40s “any time soon”, but that it will go ahead for vulnerable groups. There was not any evidence about waning immunity for young people and that included healthcare workers, he said. The issue would remain under review by the National Immunisation Advisory committee (Niac). Speaking on he told RTÉ radio’s Today show Dr Holohan denied that he was “anti” antigen tests. “It’s not the test I dislike, it’s how it’s applied.” “Our nearest neighbours, the UK, are probably the most prolific users of antigen tests, and have the greatest challenge in terms of infection that the Western world has seen”, he said. Dr Holohan said he was particularly concerned about cases where parents were using the tests when they had symptomatic children and when there was a negative result they then sent the children to school.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/health/pharmacists-call-to-be-involved-in-covid-19-booster-vaccine-rollout-1.4706611>

India delivers 1 billion Covid vaccines, but millions are yet to receive a single dose

India has administered more than 1 billion Covid-19 vaccine doses, a remarkable feat just months after a second wave of infection killed thousands of people across the country. But as India celebrated passing the milestone on Thursday, some experts warned the pandemic threat was not over -- in a nation of 1.3 billion, millions of people are yet to receive any dose at all. So far, India has fully vaccinated just 30% of its adult population and given one dose to 74%, according to India's Ministry of Health on October 16. Those statistics don't include children under 18 who make up 41% of India's population and aren't yet eligible for the jab. But even as India races to fully vaccinate its adult population, the country is opening up and exporting millions of vaccine doses. On Friday, the first foreign tourists arrived in the country after an almost 18-month pause, and within the country millions are traveling to celebrate various festivals, with movement expected to increase in November during Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights."

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/21/india/india-1-billion-covid-vaccines-intl-hnk-dst/>

Relying on Covid vaccines won't be enough - face masks will help us cope in a difficult winter

With Covid-19 controls, it can feel like déjà vu, all over again. Covid-19 cases are on the rise, and the UK now has one of the highest rates in the world. Stress on the NHS is of real concern to many, resulting in calls from health chiefs for increased restrictions. The recent news that a sub-type of the delta variant appears to be spreading across England is a reminder that evolution may move the goalposts yet again, even though this particular sub-type does not appear to cause more serious disease and is not at this point considered a variant of concern. Adding to those concerns is considerable uncertainty regarding the possible impact that seasonal influenza and other respiratory infections may have on hospitals. A combination of even moderate levels of Covid-19 hospitalisations plus flu could result in a very difficult winter indeed. On the other hand, the impact of Covid-19 measures themselves means that the demands for a return to normalcy are strong, with re-implementation of any measures needing to be considered in light of the difficult trade-offs.

<https://inews.co.uk/opinion/covid-vaccine-relying-bring-back-face-masks-cope-difficult-winter-1259578>

Three in five Australian GPs say vaccine rollout changes among biggest Covid challenges

Almost three out of five GPs reported managing patient expectations about vaccinations to be one of the most challenging issues of the pandemic, with multiple changes to vaccine eligibility requirements leaving many people confused and overwhelmed, the president of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Dr Karen Price, said. In her foreword to the college’s Health of the Nation report, published on Thursday, Price said: “Unfortunately, some of these patients took their frustrations out on general practice staff”. “Differing eligibility requirements across jurisdictions added to the strain.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/oct/21/three-in-five-australian-gps-say-vaccine-rollout-changes-among-big>

[gest-covid-challenges](#)

Covid Scotland: Tenfold increase in vaccine wastage rate

In April, some 0.3 per cent of vaccine stock was wasted. This figure increased to 2.5 per cent in July, and 3.2 per cent in September. In total over 60,000 doses have been thrown away since April. This figure does not include wastage at GP surgeries or in vaccine clinical trials. The top reason for doses being discarded in September (46 per cent) was excess stock, meaning vaccinators coming to the end of a shift or job and having surplus vaccines, which cannot be used or returned to storage. The second most common reason was doses expiring (44 per cent). Some vaccine wastage is accepted as inevitable during a large-scale vaccine rollout, and the programme has so far kept below the Scottish Government target of 5 per cent wastage.

<https://www.scotsman.com/health/covid-scotland-tenfold-increase-in-vaccine-wastage-rate-3427746>

Only 14% of promised Covid vaccine doses reach poorest nations

Only one in seven Covid vaccine doses promised to the world's poorest countries have been delivered, a report reveals. Of 1.8bn doses pledged by wealthy nations, just 261m (14%) have arrived in low-income countries, according to the analysis by the People's Vaccine Alliance, a coalition of groups that includes Oxfam, ActionAid and Amnesty International. Nearly a year after vaccines first became available, only 1.3% of people living in the poorest parts of the world are fully vaccinated.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/oct/21/only-14-of-promised-covid-vaccine-doses-reach-poorest-nations>

More people are getting boosters than new Covid-19 vaccinations. And others could soon become eligible for an additional shot

The number of people in the US looking to boost their Covid-19 vaccinations has surpassed the tally of those looking to begin them as booster doses from more drug makers may soon be available. There are 1.3 times as many boosters administered each day compared with first shots, data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows. And the number could grow, as the CDC's vaccine advisory committee prepares to meet Thursday to discuss booster doses for Moderna and Johnson & Johnson, as well as mixing and matching boosters and original doses among the drug makers.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/21/health/us-coronavirus-thursday/index.html>

India celebrates one billion COVID vaccine doses with song, film

India has administered one billion COVID-19 vaccine doses, an important milestone after a slow start, even as a recent drop in inoculations worries the government and healthcare providers. Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya will launch a song and an audio-visual film at the Mughal-era Red Fort in New Delhi on Thursday to "celebrate the landmark milestone", his ministry said. The country has already injected 998.5 million doses, nearly 90 percent of them the AstraZeneca vaccine produced domestically by the Serum Institute of India. "I appeal to all unvaccinated Indians to quickly get their shots and contribute to our historic golden vaccination journey," Mandaviya said on Twitter.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/21/india-one-billion-covid-vaccine-doses-song-film>

Who can get a Covid booster jab in England?

The coronavirus booster vaccine dose is designed to improve the protection people have received from getting the first two doses of the vaccine, and combat any waning efficiency. Data from Public Health England (PHE) suggests that the protection provided by vaccines against severe illness gradually decreases over time. The introduction of the third jab started on 20 September. On 15 October, the NHS said more than 3 million people had received it in the first four weeks.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/oct/21/who-can-get-a-covid-booster-jab-in-england>

U.S. coronavirus vaccine donations reach 200 mln doses

The United States, under pressure to share its coronavirus vaccine supply with the rest of the world, has now donated 200 million doses to more than 100 countries, the White House announced on Thursday. President Joe Biden has faced some criticism from other world leaders for offering vaccine booster shots in the United States at a time when many people around the world have not received their first shot. In recent weeks, the United States has stepped up its donations. Biden told Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta last week that the United States will make a one-time donation of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine to the African Union.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-coronavirus-vaccine-donations-reach-200-mln-doses-2021-10-21/>

Feature: Pakistani experts call for safety measures adherence, aggressive vaccination drive to beat back COVID-19

Talha Hashmi, a medical practitioner at the Benazir Bhutto Hospital in Rawalpindi, has spent comparatively quiet and peaceful days at his workplace as fears of the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic subside in Pakistan with a substantial decrease in the number of new daily infections recently. Hashmi said there were times when he was working extra hours and night shifts in the isolation ward of the hospital reserved for COVID-19 patients after the outbreak. "It was extremely challenging for us (healthcare workers). It was not only the deadly virus we were fighting, but also the fear and anxiety surrounding the disease as health experts were not sure how it behaves exactly due to its novelty... and there was no vaccine, inciting severe panic among people." "Hospitals were overwhelmed with coronavirus patients throughout the country. There was a chaotic situation. At one point, my hospital even stopped taking more patients due to the unavailability of beds and shortage of oxygen. Turning down patients who needed urgent medical assistance was the most painful and unforgettable moment of my life," Hashmi said.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/asiapacific/2021-10/21/c_1310260558.htm

Unvaccinated players face being barred after AFL issues Covid-19 job mandate

All AFL and AFLW players will need to be fully vaccinated against Covid-19 by mid-February or they will be barred from playing and training. The AFL has released its long-awaited vaccination policy, with clubs to ultimately determine action on staff who do not receive the jab. If players do not have a medical exemption, there will be options to transfer them to the inactive list, pay them no less than 25% of their contracted salary, or agree to part ways. The AFL's vaccination schedule will be rolled out across three stages, but all players will be required to have the jab eventually.

<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/oct/21/unvaccinated-players-face-being-barred-after-afl-issues-covid-19-jab-mandate>

Opinion | Will Covid Really Change the Way We Work?

The U.S. economy is in the throes of what's been called the Great Resignation: Workers are quitting their jobs at or near the highest levels on record since tracking began in 2001. The attrition is particularly acute in the hospitality sectors, but it isn't limited to low-wage industries. As of August, more than 10 million jobs sat open, causing businesses to reduce their hours and change how they operate. As my colleague David Leonhardt has said, what the economy is now experiencing is not a labor shortage so much as it is a shortage of workers who are willing to accept the terms employers are used to offering them. "It's like the whole country is in some kind of union renegotiation," Betsey Stevenson, a University of Michigan economist who was an adviser to President Barack Obama, told The Times. "I don't know who's going to win in this bargaining that's going on right now, but right now it seems like workers have the upper hand."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/21/opinion/covid-work-strikes-quit-resignation.html>

India celebrates 1B vaccine doses, hopes to speed 2nd shots

India celebrated giving its billionth COVID-19 vaccine dose on Thursday, a hopeful milestone for the South Asian country where the delta variant fueled a crushing surge earlier this year and missteps

initially held back its inoculation campaign. About half of India's nearly 1.4 billion people have received at least one dose while around 20% are fully immunized, according to Our World in Data. Many of those shots have come in just the past couple of months, after the rollout languished in the first half of the year amid vaccine shortages and problems with the system for rolling them out.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-business-health-asia-india-6946d0dd95d43975e383d28726af3fe4>

Half doses, third doses, kids' doses: Covid vaccine delivery goes next-level difficult

Sorting all this out will fall to pharmacies, immunization programs, pediatricians, and vaccine administrators, many already stretched thin, who will also have to track inventory and try to minimize waste. It will be a quick turnaround, as well: As soon as the CDC checks the final box for boosters with its recommendations, people will start demanding them. FDA leadership acknowledged all this will pose challenges. "Although it is not simple, it also is not utterly hopelessly complex," Peter Marks, director of FDA's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research, said Wednesday on a call with reporters after the agency issued the new (Moderna and J&J) and revised (Pfizer) emergency authorizations.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/10/21/half-doses-third-doses-kids-doses-covid-vaccine-delivery-goes-next-level-difficult/>

Partisan Exits

Right-wing radio host says Covid vaccines coup d'etat by 'evil cabal'

A right-wing talk show host and anti-vaxxer has come up with a conspiracy theory which suggests the government is inserting eggs in people using the Covid-19 vaccines that hatch into synthetic parasites and grow inside the human body. In a video on TruNews, a far-right Christian video streaming platform, Rick Wiles called vaccines a "global coup d'etat by the most evil cabal of people" to control the world. Mr Wiles added: "They're putting eggs in people's bodies. If you didn't see yesterday's TruNews, you need to watch it. It's an egg that hatches into a synthetic parasite and grows inside your body. This is like sci-fi nightmare, and it's happening in front of us."

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/rick-wiles-vaccine-conspiracy-theory-b1942425.html>

Instagram displays ad offering fake Covid vaccine certificates in Australia

Instagram has displayed an ad promoting fake vaccination certificates in Australia at a time when New South Wales and Victoria are emerging from Covid lockdowns and requiring people to present proof of vaccination. Vaccination status can be proven at venues in the two states over the next few months using a printed certificate from the Australian Immunisation Register, a digital certificate on a person's phone, or a record added to QR code check-in apps.

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/oct/21/instagram-displays-ad-offering-fake-covid-vaccine-certificates-in-australia>

Covid: Nicola Sturgeon urged to challenge UK Gov's vaccine 'selfishness'

Nicola Sturgeon has a "duty" to challenge the UK Government over its "staggeringly selfish" stance on providing coronavirus vaccines to poorer nations, campaigners have said. Scottish members of the People's Vaccine Alliance made the plea to the First Minister as global leaders, including UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, prepare to take part in the G20 summit in Rome. A new report for the organisation claims that of 1.8 billion Covid vaccine doses that have been promised by richer nations, only 261 million jabs – 14% – have actually been delivered. The Dose of Reality report also said the UK Government had taken 500,000 doses from the Covax programme, a worldwide initiative aimed at ensuring fair access to vaccination.

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/politics/19662500.covid-nicola-sturgeon-urged-challenge-uk-govs-vaccine-selfishness/>

Brazil's Bolsonaro accused of crimes against humanity over COVID

A Brazilian Senate report has recommended pursuing crimes against humanity and other charges against President Jair Bolsonaro over his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 66-year-old leader quickly rejected the accusations on Wednesday, insisting that he was “guilty of nothing”. More than 600,000 people in Brazil have died from COVID-19, the second-highest death toll in the world after the United States. The decision to proceed with the charges will depend on Brazil’s prosecutor-general, a Bolsonaro appointee and ally. Bolsonaro has consistently downplayed the threat of COVID-19 and touted misinformation and unproven treatments while ignoring international health guidelines on mask use and public activity.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/21/brazils-bolsonaro-accused-of-crimes-against-humanity-over-covid>

Scientific Viewpoint

Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 Booster Shot Was 95.6% Effective in Large Trial, Companies Say

A third dose of the Covid-19 vaccine from Pfizer Inc. and BioNTech SE was found in a large study to be highly protective against symptomatic Covid-19, the companies said Thursday. Researchers found 109 cases of symptomatic Covid-19 among study subjects who received a placebo shot, compared with five cases in people who took the vaccine, resulting in 95.6% efficacy, the companies said. The additional dose was safe and tolerable, and consistent with what was known about the vaccine, the companies said. The study was carried out while the highly contagious Delta variant was prevalent, the companies said, suggesting the booster helps protect against the contagious strain.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/pfizer-biontech-covid-19-booster-shot-was-95-6-effective-in-large-trial-companies-say-11634823482>

Pfizer vaccine 90% effective in warding off COVID in adolescents

The Pfizer vaccine is highly effective against preventing coronavirus in adolescents, a new Israeli study published overnight Wednesday in the New England Journal of Medicine showed. The research, which focused on youth between the ages of 12 and 18, was carried out by Clalit Health Services. It found that the vaccine was 90% effective against warding off infection and 93% effective against stopping symptomatic infection on days seven to 21 after the second dose, even against the Delta variant.

<https://m.jpost.com/health-and-wellness/coronavirus/pfizer-vaccine-90-percent-effective-in-warding-off-covid-in-adolescents-682727>

COVID vaccine makers brace for a variant worse than Delta

Pfizer’s chief executive, Albert Bourla, made a bold promise in June. Standing next to US President Joe Biden at a press conference in St Ives, UK, just before the G7 summit meeting, Bourla said that should the need arise for a new COVID-19 vaccine, his company could get one ready within 100 days. The need he was referring to is the possible emergence of an ‘escape variant’ — a dominant strain of SARS-CoV-2 that evades the fledgling immunity established through vaccines and previous infections. No such strain has yet been identified, but Pfizer and other leading COVID-19 vaccine makers are gearing up for that scenario. What does it take to be nimble enough to design and test an updated vaccine against an unknown viral strain, in record time? Nature spoke to three COVID-19 vaccine makers — Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca — to find out exactly how they are preparing.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-02854-3>

EU decision on Russia's Sputnik V shot 'impossible' this year - source

The EU drug regulator is unlikely to decide whether to approve Russia's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine until at least the first quarter of 2022 because some data needed for the review is still missing, a source with knowledge of the matter said. "An EMA decision by the end of the year is now absolutely impossible," the source said, referring to the European Medicines Agency. If the required data is received by the end of November, "then the regulators may well decide in the first quarter of

next year", he said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/exclusive-eu-decision-russias-sputnik-v-shot-impossible-this-year-source-2021-10-21/>

Schools should stay open as greatest risk of Covid transmission is in households, research finds

Despite Delta being more transmissible than earlier Covid-19 variants, in Australia few children and adolescents who get the virus have severe symptoms, and schools should only be closed under exceptional circumstances, a research analysis from the Murdoch Children's Research Institute has found. However, the analysis reveals children and adolescents living with some pre-existing health conditions, including obesity, and those living in disadvantage, low socioeconomic communities or those with minority ethnic status have an increased risk of severe disease. The analysis also said ventilation is important and mental health surveillance is needed across both primary and secondary schools.

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/oct/21/schools-should-stay-open-as-greatest-risk-of-covid-transmission-is-in-households-research-finds>

U.S. FDA clears Moderna, J&J COVID-19 boosters, backs use of different vaccine for boost

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration authorized booster doses of the COVID-19 vaccines from Moderna and Johnson & Johnson, and said Americans can choose a different shot from their original inoculation as a booster. That means all three vaccines authorized in the United States can also be given as boosters to some groups. "The availability of these authorized boosters is important for continued protection against COVID-19 disease," acting FDA Commissioner Janet Woodcock said in a statement. She noted that data suggests vaccine effectiveness may wane over time in some fully vaccinated people.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-fda-clears-moderna-jj-boosters-backs-mix-and-match-strategy-2021-10-20/>

Japan's Shionogi starts Phase II/III clinical trial for new COVID-19 vaccine

Japan's Shionogi & Co said it had started a Phase II/III clinical trial for its COVID-19 vaccine candidate. The trial for the recombinant protein-based vaccine will take place in Japan and follows a Phase I trial in the country, Shionogi said in a statement. The company will also prepare to conduct multiple trials globally, it said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japans-shionogi-announces-start-phase-iii-clinical-trial-new-covid-19-vaccine-2021-10-21/>

UK adds nerve disorder as rare side-effect of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine

The UK drug regulator added an extremely rare nerve-damaging disorder, Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS), as a very rare side effect of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, updates on the agency's website showed on Thursday. Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's (MHRA) decision comes after the European medicines agency added GBS as a possible side-effect last month

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-adds-nerve-disorder-rare-side-effect-astrazeneca-covid-19-vaccine-2021-10-21/>

CDC Panel Endorses Moderna and J.&J. Boosters for Millions

In a sweeping victory for the Biden administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Thursday endorsed booster shots of the Moderna and the Johnson & Johnson Covid-19 vaccines for tens of millions of Americans. The decision follows an agency endorsement last month of booster shots of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and opens the door for many Americans to seek out a booster shot as early as Friday. The coronavirus vaccines "are all highly effective in reducing the risk of severe disease, hospitalization, and death, even in the midst of the widely circulating Delta variant," Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the C.D.C. said in a statement on Thursday night.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/21/health/cdc-mix-match-booster-shot.html>

Pfizer-BioNTech report high efficacy of COVID boosters in study

Pfizer and its partner BioNTech have said data from a Phase III trial demonstrated high efficacy of a booster dose of their COVID-19 vaccine against the coronavirus, including the Delta variant. They said a trial of 10,000 participants aged 16 or older showed 95.6 percent effectiveness against the disease, during a period when the Delta strain was prevalent. The study also found that the booster shot had a favourable safety profile.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/21/pfizer-biontech-report-high-efficacy-of-covid-boosters-in-study>

Moderna, Johnson & Johnson COVID boosters nab FDA nods as agency backs 'mix-and-match' approach

The FDA has authorized a booster dose of Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine, allowing it to play catch up with the Pfizer-BioNTech shot, which scored a booster approval last month. The agency also blessed a second dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. That nod applies to adults who have received one J&J shot two months prior. "The currently available data suggest waning immunity in some populations of fully vaccinated people," FDA acting commissioner Janet Woodcock told reporters on Wednesday night. "The availability of these authorized boosters is important for continued protection against COVID-19."

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/fda-approves-moderna-johnson-johnson-covid-19-boosters-also-backs-mixing-and-matching>

Pfizer strong-armed governments in COVID-19 vaccine supply talks, report says

Pfizer is playing a leading role in producing vaccines against COVID-19, but new documents released by Public Citizen shine a light on the company's aggressive tactics when negotiating supply deals. In draft and final deals with the U.S., the U.K., Brazil and other countries, Pfizer retained rights to "silence" governments and "throttle supply" in an effort to "maximize profits" amid the world's "worst public health crisis in a century," Public Citizen concluded. For instance, in a deal with Brazil, Pfizer restricted the government from making "any public announcement concerning the existence, subject matter or terms of [the] Agreement" without a signoff from the drugmaker. Brazil also couldn't talk about the country's relationship with Pfizer without a signoff, Public Citizen said.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/pfizer-strong-armed-governments-covid-19-vaccine-supply-talks-report-says>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Covid-19: Four more deaths as 1,051 new cases recorded

Another four people have died after contracting Covid-19, the Department of Health has confirmed. The total number of deaths since the pandemic began now stands at 2,639. A further 1,051 cases of the virus were recorded in the latest 24-hour reporting period. As of this morning, there were 357 Covid-19 confirmed patients in hospital and 35 in intensive care. Of these, 25 are on ventilators. Hospitals in the north are over capacity by 224 beds.

<https://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2021/10/21/news/covid-19-four-more-deaths-as-1-051-new-cases-recorded-2485961/>

New Zealand's COVID-19 cases hit record for second time this week

New Zealand reported record daily COVID-19 cases for the second time in three days on Thursday, as the Delta variant continued to spur a spike in infections in the country's biggest city, Auckland. Authorities reported 102 new COVID-19 infections, of which 94 were in Auckland, taking the total number of cases in the current outbreak to 2,260. There have been 28 deaths in total since the pandemic began and 46 people are currently hospitalised because of the virus. New Zealand had stayed largely virus-free for most of the pandemic until the Delta outbreak in mid-August that has spread across Auckland and neighbouring regions, prompting tight restrictions on some 1.7 million Aucklanders that were extended further this week.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/new-zealands-covid-19-cases-hit-record-second-time-this-week-2021-10-2>

Singapore extends restrictions after reporting highest single-day Covid-19 deaths

Singapore will extend its Covid-19 restrictions for another month after the city-state reported 18 new deaths from the disease on Wednesday, its highest number of the pandemic. In a news release Thursday, Singapore's Ministry of Health said current measures would be extended to November 21, to help contain case numbers, which rose by more than 3,800 on Wednesday. "Unfortunately, given the continuing pressures on our healthcare system, more time is needed for the situation to stabilise," the ministry said in its statement, adding hospitals were braced for "a sustained, heavy patient load." "(The ministry) is doing whatever we can to support and bolster the hospitals," the statement said.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/20/asia/singapore-covid-19-deaths-intl-hnk/index.html>

Belgium braces for another surge in COVID-19 cases

Belgium's government warned Thursday that the country could well be on the cusp of another major surge in COVID-19 cases despite its high vaccination rate. Though the government recently relaxed the mandatory use of facemasks, it is again starting to encourage the population to use them to counter a rise in cases reminiscent of the first three surges of the past 1 1/2 years. "We are clearly in a fourth wave," Health Minister Frank Vandenbroucke told the VRT network. "We will see a major increase in infections and, unfortunately, hospital admissions." The government has this month loosened some restrictions, including allowing for more indoor events and dropping requirements for customers to wear masks in bars.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/covid-rates-rise-vaccine-belgium-b1942532.html>

Russia reports cases of more contagious COVID-19 Delta subvariant

Russia has reported "isolated cases" of COVID-19 with a subvariant of the Delta variant that is believed to be even more contagious, the state consumer watchdog's senior researcher said on Thursday. The researcher, Kamil Khafizov, said the AY.4.2 subvariant may be around 10% more infectious than the original Delta - which has driven new cases and deaths to a series of record daily highs in Russia - and could ultimately replace it. However, he said this was likely to be a slow process.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-reports-cases-more-contagious-covid-19-variant-reports-2021-10-21/>

Deep within the UK's shocking Covid data, there may be reasons for optimism

John Edmunds, a member of Sage and professor in the faculty of epidemiology and population health at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, said while the epidemic has looked relatively stable over the past few months, "this has masked large changes under the surface, with rises and falls in levels of immunity in different age groups being generated by different processes - levels of immunity are rapidly increasing in children due to sky-high infection rates, whereas immunity is falling in older age groups who were vaccinated earlier in the year". He added: "How these dynamics play out is very difficult to predict right now, but it is clear that speeding up the vaccine rollout in children and boosters in adults will help both in the short and longer term."

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/21/deep-within-the-uks-shocking-covid-data-there-may-be-reasons-for-optimism>

Ukraine hits all-time death record amid vaccine hesitancy

Coronavirus infections and deaths in Ukraine surged to all-time highs Thursday amid a laggard pace of vaccination, with overall inoculations among the lowest in Europe. Ukrainian authorities reported 22,415 new confirmed infections and 546 deaths in the past 24 hours, the highest numbers since the start of the pandemic. Authorities have blamed a spike in infections on a slow pace of vaccination in the nation of 41 million. Ukrainians can choose between Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca and Sinovac vaccines, but only about 15% of the population is fully vaccinated, Europe's lowest level

after Armenia.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-ukraine-europe-coronavirus-vaccine-5ad7fb543096e0c2278976007ce12860>

New Lockdown

Latvia is first country to reimpose lockdown in Europe's new Covid wave

Latvia has announced a month-long Covid-19 lockdown after an unprecedented surge in infections, becoming the first country in Europe to reimpose far-reaching restrictions amid a new wave of cases in countries across the continent. The Baltic country has one of the highest rates of new Covid cases relative to population in the world, according to the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), after successfully keeping the virus at bay for months. "Our health system is in danger ... The only way out of this crisis is to get vaccinated," the prime minister, Krišjānis Kariņš, said on Monday evening at an emergency government meeting. He said the country's low vaccination rate was to blame for the surge in hospital admissions.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/20/latvia-enters-month-long-covid-lockdown-as-fourth-wave-breaks>

Parts of northern China brace for more COVID-19 lockdowns and curbs

Parts of northern China are bracing for more COVID-19 curbs as a wave of cases raises concerns of a broader outbreak, with three areas enforcing lockdowns, some schools halting classes, and an aerospace firm delaying work on a rocket project. China reported 13 new domestically transmitted cases for Oct. 20, bringing the total number since Oct. 16 to 42, data from the National Health Commission (NHC) showed on Thursday.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/parts-northern-china-brace-more-covid-19-lockdowns-curbs-2021-10-21/>

Moscow to reintroduce lockdown measures from Oct. 28 to combat COVID-19 case surge

Moscow will reintroduce lockdown measures from Oct. 28 to combat surging COVID-19 cases, Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said on Thursday, with all shops, bars and restaurants due to close, except those selling essential goods, such as supermarkets and pharmacies. President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday approved a nationwide week-long workplace shutdown from Oct. 30 to Nov. 7 and said regional leaders could introduce other measures at their discretion. Russia reported a record daily high of both coronavirus-related deaths and new COVID-19 infections on Thursday.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/moscow-reintroduce-lockdown-measures-oct-28-combat-covid-19-case-surge-2021-10-21/>

Moscow to shut shops, schools as COVID-19 deaths soar

Restaurants, movie theaters and many retail stores in Moscow will be closed for 11 days starting Oct. 28, along with other new restrictions, officials said Thursday, as Russia recorded the highest numbers of coronavirus infections and deaths since the pandemic began. The government coronavirus task force reported 36,339 new infections and 1,036 deaths in the past 24 hours. That brought Russia's death toll to 227,389, by far the highest in Europe. President Vladimir Putin has voiced consternation about Russians' hesitancy to get vaccinated and urged them to get the shots, but firmly ruled out making them mandatory.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-russia-europe-vladimir-putin-a9a05379a2f571ee84d68fd3bbc15f41>