COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis
28th Jul 2022

Lockdown Exit

Almost 9% have received second Covid-19 vaccine booster

The average percentage of people who have received a second Covid-19 vaccine booster is almost 9% across the country's Local Electoral Areas (LEAs), new figures show. Data released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) reveals that the average rate for a second booster shot was 8.7%, with individual areas ranging from 2% to 15%. The LEAs with the lowest second booster levels are Blanchardstow, Mulhuddart, Tallaght South and Ongar.

https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/republic-of-ireland/almost-9-have-received-second-covid-19-vaccine-booster-41871609.html

Millions of US children remain unvaccinated as BA.5 spreads and new school year looms

Millions of school-age children in the United States are still unvaccinated against Covid-19 as many prepare for a return to school. A new CNN analysis finds that less than half of children and teens are fully vaccinated against Covid-19, and only a tenth have been boosted. Many of the nation's largest school systems -- including Los Angeles Unified, City of Chicago, Miami-Dade County and Clark County in Nevada -- start school next month.

https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/27/health/kids-covid-vaccine-booster-back-to-school/index.html

Austria ends COVID-19 quarantine for those with no symptoms

People infected with COVID-19 will no longer have to quarantine themselves in Austria if they don't exhibit any symptoms, the country's health minister announced Tuesday.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/austria-ends-covid-19-quarantine-for-those-with-no-symptoms-122072601440_1.html

Covid-19 Northern Ireland: New symptom spotted as Health Minister extends availability of coronavirus tests

Lateral flow testing for those with Covid-19 symptoms in Northern Ireland is to continue into August, the Health Minister has confirmed. Robin Swann had previously explained the tests would remain available until the end of this month, citing the rising level of cases of the virus both in Northern Ireland and the UK as a whole. It comes as a warning has emerged over a new strain of the virus that could be causing some sufferers to experience night sweats. Professor Luke O'Neill from Trinity College Dublin said the Omicron BA.5 variant - which has contributed to rising cases across the UK and globe – was causing the "strange" symptom.

https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus/covid-19-new-symptom-spotted-as-health-minister-extends-availability-of-tests-in-northern-ireland-41871501.html

Report: NBA will not have vaccination mandate in 2022-23

After some high-profile vaccine-related absences from games last season, the NBA will not have a COVID-19 vaccine mandate for players in 2022-23, Yahoo Sports reported Tuesday, citing a memo from the league office it had obtained. The league will "strongly suggest" team personnel stay up-to-date with vaccinations, per the report. Discussions between the league and the NBA Players Association remain ongoing about whether unvaccinated players will be subject to periodic COVID-19 testing during the upcoming season.

https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/report-nba-will-not-have-vaccination-mandate-2022-23-2022-07-27/

Wuhan Locks Down 1 Million Residents in Echo of Pandemic's Start

A district on the outskirts of Wuhan has been locked down, the first time the Chinese city that saw the world's first Covid-19 lockdown has imposed such a measure since 2020, underscoring how far the country is from post-pandemic normalcy. More than two years since the city was sealed off to contain what was then a mysterious pneumonia, almost 1 million residents of Wuhan's Jiangxia district have been told to stay in their homes and not go out unless necessary. All public transport has been stopped and entertainment venues shut for three days after four asymptomatic cases were found in the district on Tuesday.

https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-27/wuhan-locks-down-1-million-residents-in-echo-of-pandemic-s-start?srnd=premium-uk

Exit Strategies

Coronavirus vaccine can be obtained 3 months after recovery: official

The Ministry of Health and Population added the vaccine reduces the chances of infection with the virus and helps reduce serious complications when infected. Head of the Scientific Committee to Combat Coronavirus at Egypt's Ministry of Health and Population, Hossam Hosny, explained that the drugs included in the treatment protocol of the coronavirus and its variants are available in all hospitals and are dispensed free of charge.

https://egyptindependent.com/coronavirus-vaccine-can-be-obtained-3-months-after-recovery-official/

Queensland COVID-19 surge sparks calls for improved PCR access amid RAT accuracy fears

Mass testing clinics and removing barriers to PCR testing could speed up access to antiviral medication, experts say. They are urging people who still feel sick despite having tested negative using a RAT to get a PCR swab. Pathology Technology Australia says people with false negative results may not be using RATs properly

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-07-27/queensland-covid-19-surge-sparks-calls-for-improved-pcr-access/101272782

There's fresh focus on using masks to slow COVID-19. So can you reuse masks? And if so, what's the best way?

As Omicron variants of COVID-19 continue to fuel a rise in cases across Australia, there is renewed focus on masks as a simple way to prevent the spread of the virus. Australia's COVID-19 cases and death rates are now some of the highest in the world per capita, and the numbers are getting worse. It has led National Cabinet to strongly encourage the wearing of masks indoors, when appropriate, and authorities have warned Australia's current COVID-19 wave will likely peak in August. So with masks back in focus again, let's take a look at reusing them.

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-07-27/reusing-masks-covid-19-washing-cloth-surgical-n95-p2/101273926

A global effort to stop COVID-19 in Africa is underway–and it starts with health care workers

The latest wave of infections across the world provides us with yet another reminder the COVID-19 pandemic is far from over. For many in developing countries, this will come as no surprise. While three in four people living in high-income countries have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, the vaccination rate falls to just one in six in low-income countries. This is particularly true in Africa, where less than a fifth of the continent's population has been fully vaccinated. Africa's vaccine rollout is lagging compared to wealthier regions even though there is an overabundance of supply across the globe. We need to recognize COVID-19 vaccine supply is not the only barrier to tackling the pandemic. For many African countries, the bigger issue is having enough trained health workers able to deliver life-saving vaccines into the arms of patients.

https://fortune.com/2022/07/27/global-effort-stop-covid-19-africa-health-care-workers-serum-institute-india-adar-poo

nwalla/

North Korea holds mask-free veterans event after flagging near end of COVID crisis

North Korea has held a large mask-free public event for the first time since declaring a COVID-19 emergency in May, honouring veterans of the 1950-53 Korean war just days after saying its coronavirus crisis was nearly over. Photos released by state media on Wednesday showed thousands of participants at the annual ceremony without masks, including senior ruling Workers' Party officials and elderly uniformed veterans.

https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/nkorea-holds-mask-free-veterans-event-after-flagging-near-end-covid-crisis-2022-07-27/

Partisan Exits

MPs criticise government award of £777mn Covid contracts to medical group Randox

The UK government's "woefully inadequate record-keeping" means it is "impossible to have confidence" that £777mn of contracts won by medical diagnostics company Randox as part of the country's Covid-19 testing programme were awarded properly, according to a new report. The House of Commons public accounts committee on Wednesday accused the Department of Health and Social Care of failing to "show any evidence of taking any care" over potential conflicts of interest, despite officials being aware of contacts between former Conservative minister Owen Paterson, a paid consultant to Randox, and the then health secretary Matt Hancock.

https://www.ft.com/content/2cd06598-5852-4042-99b6-26a678616c9e

Scientist at forefront of China's early investigations into Covid-19 steps down

George Gao, head of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, has stepped down after five years at the helm of the health body, ending a tenure that placed him at the fore of early investigations into the first outbreak of Covid-19 in central China and the country's rapid development of Covid-19 vaccines. The leadership change, announced by the agency on Tuesday, comes amid a restructuring that has seen the China CDC moved from its position directly under the monolithic centrally controlled National Health Commission and placed within a new nominally streamlined bureau, borne of pandemic-era calls for reform.

https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/27/china/china-cdc-director-george-gao-fu-covid-intl-hnk-mic/index.html

Scientific Viewpoint

Novavax Covid-19 vaccine gets Australian TGA approval for adolescents

Novavax has received expanded approval for provisional registration from the Australian Therapeutic Goods Agency (TGA) for its Covid-19 vaccine, Nuvaxovid (NVX-CoV2373), for use in adolescents aged 12 to 17 years. Nuvaxovid is indicated for active immunisation for the prevention of Covid-19 in individuals of this age group. It is the first protein-based vaccine to be offered in Australia for adolescents aged 12 to 17 years. The approval is based on findings from the paediatric expansion of the Phase III PREVENT-19 clinical trial of 2,247 adolescents of this age group at 73 sites in the US.

https://www.pharmaceutical-technology.com/news/novavax-australian-approval-adolescents/

Pfizer and BioNTech Advance COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy With Study Start of Next-Generation Vaccine Candidate Based on Enhanced Spike Protein Design

This is the first of multiple vaccine candidates with an enhanced design which the companies plan to evaluate as part of a long-term scientific COVID-19 vaccine strategy to potentially generate more robust,

https://apnews.com/press-release/globe-newswire/covid-science-health-pfizer-inc-36f539891828a8d738965876eee13df7

The Future of COVID Vaccines: will you need constant boosters or is a single "forever" shot possible?

Most Australians over 30 are now eligible for their fourth COVID vaccine booster shot. But will there ever be a "forever" vaccine, that removes the need for boosters? Or a vaccine that stops you contracting COVID in the first place? Royal Melbourne Hospital's Dr Kudza Kanhutu specialises in infectious diseases and has a background in immunology. Hear her discuss what the future of COVID vaccines might look like with Nadia on Mornings

https://www.abc.net.au/perth/programs/mornings/future-of-covid-vaccines/13991280

Bharat Biotech, ExcellGene consortium to develop variant-proof Covid vax

Switzerland's ExcellGene SA has announced its role in the recently approved consortium funding through the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) for co-developing a variant-proof coronavirus vaccine with India's Bharat Biotech. The consortium is developing or designing a new vaccine concept that confers highly cross-reactive protection against numerous SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern as well as other betacoronaviruses.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/bharat-biotech-excellgene-consortium-progress-to-develop-variant-proof-vax-122072601269_1.html

New studies bolster theory coronavirus emerged from the wild

Two new studies provide more evidence that the coronavirus pandemic originated in a Wuhan, China market where live animals were sold – further bolstering the theory that the virus emerged in the wild rather than escaping from a Chinese lab. The research, published online Tuesday by the journal Science, shows that the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market was likely the early epicenter of the scourge that has now killed nearly 6.4 million people around the world. Scientists conclude that the virus that causes COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2, likely spilled from animals into people two separate times. "All this evidence tells us the same thing: It points right to this particular market in the middle of Wuhan," said Kristian Andersen a professor in the Department of Immunology and Microbiology at Scripps Research and coauthor of one of the studies.

https://www.independent.co.uk/news/ap-scientists-wuhan-science-china-b2131904.html

How Much Rest Do You Really Need When You Get Covid-19?

Many people feel the urge to power through after testing positive for Covid-19. President Biden recently told Americans he was "getting a lot of work done" after testing positive and tweeted a photo of himself signing a bill at his desk. Doctors say it is important to rest, even for people with mild to moderate cases of the virus. Some doctors worry that as we get more inured to the pandemic, some people with symptoms aren't taking enough down time. Pushing yourself too hard can lengthen your recovery, they say, adding that the healing trajectory for Covid-19 is less predictable than for other respiratory illnesses.

https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-muchrestdo-you-really-need-when-you-get-covid-19-11658926557

Does the Covid vaccine really affect your period? Here's what our study found

In January 2021, my colleagues at the hospital were among the first to receive the Covid-19 vaccine. Comparing the side-effects afterwards, most of us had a sore arm, some of us felt feverish and generally under the weather, but one comment stood out. "My period was heavier than usual," said one of the midwives. "But that happens to me every year after we get our flu vaccines, too. It's just another of those vaccine side-effects, isn't it?" Was it? I'm an immunologist working in female reproduction and this was the first time I had heard of such an effect, but it didn't strike me as implausible. We know that various stressors, physical and psychological, can influence the menstrual cycle and vaccination is certainly a physical stressor; those of us who were complaining of feeling under the weather could attest to that. And yet I wondered why, if this effect was as run of the mill as my colleague seemed to think, it wasn't something I had heard before.

https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jul/27/covid-vaccine-period-menstrual-cycles

Covid-19 antibody levels jump among oldest age groups after spring booster jabs

Covid-19 antibody levels among the oldest age groups have jumped sharply in recent months, following the rollout of spring booster jabs, new figures suggest. Some 94.3% of people aged 80 and over in England were likely to have antibodies at the start of July, up from 65.8% at the end of March. Among 75- to 79-year-olds, the proportion stands at 93.1%, up from 62.8%. The figures have been calculated by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and use a higher threshold for measuring antibodies than in previous studies, in order to better reflect the proportion of people with the strongest possible antibody response to infection.

https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/office-for-national-statistics-england-b2132264.html

The Earliest Known Cases of COVID-19 Have Finally Been Pinpointed

Wild animals sold on the southwestern side of the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan were the most likely source of the COVID-19 outbreak, a team of 18 international scientists claim. While there's still no 'smoking gun', it seems there is a mountain of circumstantial evidence that would be very statistically unlikely to exist without the Wuhan markets at the epicenter of the outbreak. According to a 2021 World Health Organisation (WHO) mission report, a total of 174 people caught SARS-CoV-2 in the very early days of the outbreak in December 2019. Locations of where 155 of those people lived and worked were able to be extracted from the report. In their study published in Science, the international team of researchers found that the majority of these 155 people lived near the west bank of the Yangtze River, where the Wuhan markets are located. There was a high density of cases surrounding the market.

https://www.sciencealert.com/scientists-have-finally-pinpointed-the-location-of-the-earliest-cases-of-covid-19

Pfizer starts mid-stage trial for vaccine against Omicron subvariant

Pfizer Inc and its German partner BioNTech SE said on Wednesday they had started a mid-stage study of a modified COVID-19 vaccine which targets both the original as well as the BA.2 Omicron subvariant. Pfizer said the vaccine is in an initial proof-of-concept study to gather more data. Together, the BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants are estimated to make up nearly 95% of the circulating coronavirus variants in the United States for the week ended July 23.

https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/pfizer-starts-mid-stage-trial-omicron-targeting-vaccine-2022-07-27/

FDA Clears Danish Monkeypox Vaccine Plant, Paving Way for Use of Doses in U.S.

The Food and Drug Administration signed off on a Bavarian Nordic A/S monkeypox vaccine plant, a move that allows use in the U.S. of 786,000 doses made at the facility in Denmark. The FDA said Wednesday it had validated the quality of the shots made at the plant and they met the agency's standards. "This action by the FDA is a critical step forward in our plans to strengthen and accelerate our monkeypox response, which includes distributing a safe and effective vaccine to those at highest risk of exposure to monkeypox," Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra said. Health authorities seeking to vaccinate people at high risk of monkeypox have been waiting for the shots. The federal government had allowed the 786,000 doses to be shipped to the U.S. in advance to speed their availability once the FDA cleared the plant.

https://www.wsj.com/articles/fda-clears-danish-monkeypox-vaccine-plant-paving-way-for-use-of-doses-in-u-s-11658952436

CDC to make monkeypox nationally notifiable condition

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said on Wednesday it plans to make the rapidly spreading monkeypox disease a nationally notifiable condition. The designation, which is set to take effect on Aug. 1, updates criteria for reporting of data on cases by states to the agency and would allow the agency to monitor and respond to monkeypox even after the current outbreak

recedes, the CDC said.
https://www.reuters.com/world/us/cdc-make-monkeypox-nationally-notifiable-condition-politico-2022-07-27/

Coronavirus Resurgence

South Korea reports 100,285 new Covid-19 cases; fatality rate at 0.13%
South Korea reported 100,285 new COVID-19 cases as of midnight Tuesday compared to 24 hours ago, raising the total number of infections to 19,446,946, the health authorities said on Wednesday. The daily caseload was up from 99,327 the previous day, and higher than 76,379 tallied a week earlier, according to the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA). For the past week, the daily average number of confirmed cases was 72,735. Among the new cases, 532 were imported from overseas, lifting the total to 42,683.
https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/south-korea-reports-100-285-new-covid-19-cases-122072700773_1.html

Covid-19: Hong Kong logs 4508 cases as Penny's Bay camp for the infected reaches 60% capacity
Hong Kong reported 4,508 Covid-19 infections on Wednesday – the highest in almost three months. The infection figures exceeded 4,000 for the seventh day in a row, with 10 deaths also reported on Wednesday. The recent surge has seen the city's only operational isolation camp reach 60 per cent capacity, according to the Security Bureau, which manages the facility.
https://hongkongfp.com/2022/07/27/covid-19-hong-kong-logs-4508-cases-as-pennys-bay-camp-for-the-infected-reaches-60-capacity/

New Zealand COVID-19 cases trend downwards and steer clear of feared infection peak
New Zealand's Health Director-General Ashley Bloomfield says the shift in case rates was supported by waste-water testing. Omicron BA.5 sub-variant has been driving the current wave in New Zealand. The country has recorded a total of about 1.6 million infections and 1,427 deaths, although the way it records deaths is changing
https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-07-27/new-zealand-covid-19-cases-trend-downwards/101274588

newsGP - Almost one in every two Australians has had COVID-19
Almost one in two Australians had COVID-19 in the six months leading up to June, the results of a new blood survey indicate – and that figure is likely to be a significant understatement. Researchers at UNSW's Kirby Institute at UNSW Sydney and the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS) have released the results of their most recent study into the prevalence of SARS-CoV-2 antibodies in the wider community. The research involved analysing 5139 de-identified blood donor specimens from around Australia from donations given from 9–18 June.
https://www1.racgp.org.au/newsgp/clinical/almost-one-in-every-two-australians-has-had-covid

China reports 703 new COVID cases for July 26 vs 976 day earlier
China reported 703 new coronavirus cases for July 26, of which 120 were symptomatic and 583 were asymptomatic, the National Health Commission said on Wednesday. That compared with 976 new cases a day earlier - 148 symptomatic and 828 asymptomatic infections, which China counts separately. There were no new deaths, leaving the nation's fatalities at 5,226. As of July 26, mainland China had confirmed 229,066 cases with symptoms.
https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-reports-703-new-covid-cases-july-26-vs-976-day-earlier-2022-07-27/

No new daily COVID cases in Macau for first time in over a month
Authorities in Macau reported no new COVID-19 infections on Wednesday for the first time since mid-June, after the city's worst outbreak of the disease led to a 12-day closure of casinos and locked down most of the world's biggest gambling hub. The tally of infections since June 18 stood at 1,816, the government said in a statement, as the city grapples with the fast-spreading Omicron variant for

the first time.
https://www.reuters.com/world/china/no-new-daily-covid-cases-macau-first-time-over-month-2022-07-27/

Toyota suspends some Japan factory output over COVID outbreak
Toyota Motor Corp has suspended night shift operations at one production line of its Takaoka factory in central Japan because of a COVID-19 outbreak, the company said on Wednesday. The cancellation came after eight plant workers caught the virus, it said. Toyota suspended night shift production of the line on Tuesday. The partial suspension would affect vehicle output of about 650 units from the two shifts, a Toyota spokesperson told Reuters.
https://www.reuters.com/business/autos-transportation/toyota-suspends-some-japan-factory-output-over-covid-outbreak-2022-07-27/

COVID infections fall in New Zealand, worst case scenario likely avoided
New Zealand's government said on Wednesday new COVID-19 cases were trending down and it looked likely the country would avoid a feared worst-case scenario of 20,000 infections daily. In the last seven days there were on average 8,111 new cases daily of COVID, down from a seven-day rolling average of 9,367 new cases in the week prior, according to Health Ministry data released on Wednesday. Currently 808 people were in hospital with COVID, which was also a lower number than earlier, data showed
https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/covid-infections-fall-new-zealand-worst-case-scenario-likely-avoided-2022-07-27/

New Lockdown

China's Wuhan shuts some businesses, transport amid new COVID cases
China's central metropolis of Wuhan temporarily shut some businesses and public transport in a district with almost a million people on Wednesday, as the city where the pandemic first emerged raised vigilance after several new infections. China, heavily invested in its "dynamic COVID zero" policy, relies on mass testing, quick restriction on business activity and people's movements and strict quarantine of cases to block nascent clusters from widening.
https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-wuhan-shuts-some-businesses-transport-amid-new-covid-cases-2022-07-27/

Shanghai's Baoshan district orders Covid-19 lockdown on some steel warehouses
A district in China's financial hub of Shanghai has ordered a three-day lockdown of some of its steel warehouses from July 26 after a residential neighbourhood in the district was classified as high risk following the detection of a coronavirus case there. Three out of six warehouses in the Baoshan district that Reuters contacted said they were required to enter a "closed-loop" system with no staff or materials allowed in or out of the warehouses. Operations inside the warehouses, however, are running normally. "It's like quarantine, we are not allowed to leave the warehouses. Steel can't be transported in or out, but we still work and we have food stored in advance," a worker at one of the warehouses in Baoshan district told Reuters, who did not identify himself as he was not authorised to speak to the press.
https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/shanghais-baoshan-district-orders-lockdown-on-some-steel-warehouses

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were found in the district on Tuesday.
https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-27/wuhan-locks-down-1-million-residents-in-echo-of-pandemic-s-start