

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

19th Aug 2021

Overnight News RoundUp

One Minute Overview

1. **Israel will reportedly expand its COVID vaccine booster program** [to all Israelis 12 years and older starting next month, significantly expanding a program that has already seen over 1 million people over the age of 50](#) or immunocompromised receive a third dose of the shot.
2. New Zealand had been virus-free and living without curbs until **PM Jacinda Arden ordered a snap 3-day lockdown after a single case, suspected to be Delta, was found in its largest city Auckland**. [Genome sequencing confirmed the Auckland case was linked to an outbreak in Australia's New South Wales states](#), but how the Delta case entered the community is still not yet clear
3. STAT News reported that the health of the immunocompromised depends on far more than a Covid-19 booster shot. **They need more people in the general population to be vaccinated, and quickly, as the Delta variant is more transmissible and severe than earlier strains of SARS-CoV-2 and the virus could outsmart current vaccines and mutate again**. We need effective treatment treatments for people because cases are on the rise and that includes children - for whom we need vaccines approved for kids under 11 as we approach another school year
4. A trio of new real-world US studies examine the ongoing effectiveness of two doses of the BioNTech/Pfizer and Moderna mRNA vaccines against Covid-19, **one finding indicating ebbing efficacy against infection in nursing home residents and two others showing sustained protection against coronavirus-related hospitalizations but declining coverage against new adult cases**. The authors say it underscores the need for heightened vigilance and a multipronged approach to prevent Covid-19 amid diminishing vaccine effectiveness and the ongoing surge of cases caused by the Delta variant
5. A vast majority of US residents live in an area with high Covid-19 transmission, but hospitalization and death rates are significantly higher in states with the lowest vaccination rates. **In the 10 states with the lowest vaccination rates, fewer than 41% of their residents have been fully vaccinated. In the 10 states with the highest vaccination rates, more than 58% of their residents have been inoculated against coronavirus**. Hospitalization rates in those bottom 10 states are nearly four times higher, and death rates are more than 5.5 times higher than in the top 10 states, according to a CNN analysis of federal data.

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Israel will reportedly expand its COVID vaccine booster program to all Israelis 12 years and older starting next month, significantly expanding a program that has already seen over 1 million people over the age of 50 or immunocompromised receive a third dose of the shot. Early data from the booster shot campaign has reportedly shown promising results, with some health officials predicting that re-upping the vaccine across the population will tamp down on a major surge in infections wracking the country.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-reportedly-set-to-offer-covid-boosters-to-all-starting-next-month/>

New Zealanders begin life in lockdown as Delta COVID-19 cases edge up

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Delta variant finally enters New Zealand. Cases rise to seven; all linked. Nation in 3-day lockdown, Auckland shut for 7 days. PM Ardern blamed for vaccine delays

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/new-zealand-reports-4-more-covid-19-cases-delta-variant-spreads-2021-08-17/>

Booster shots alone won't protect immunocompromised people from Covid-19

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In March 2020, I fought the virus and won. Barely. But my gratitude for the chance to live, to continue to be a husband and father, and to work in the hospital again doesn't translate into an optimistic perspective on the latest deadly phase of the pandemic. Collectively, we may be running out of second chances. Some herald a booster shot intended to protect patients with weakened and/or suppressed immune systems as a second chance, with the Biden administration likely to expand that in mid-September to all Americans who received an mRNA vaccine (Moderna or Pfizer/BioNTech).

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/08/18/booster-shots-alone-wont-protect-immunocompromised-people-from-covid-19/>

Studies: COVID vaccine protection waning against infection but not hospitalization

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A trio of new real-world US studies examine the ongoing effectiveness of two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna mRNA vaccines against COVID-19, one finding significantly ebbing efficacy against infection in nursing home residents and two showing sustained protection against coronavirus-related hospitalizations but declining coverage against new adult cases. The studies were cited today as White House officials announced plans to offer booster doses of the vaccines beginning next month (see related CIDRAP News story). They were published today in Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, the journal of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/08/studies-covid-vaccine-protection-waning-against-infection-not>

Child Covid-19 cases are steadily increasing. But with schools opening, expert warns this is just the beginning

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A vast majority of US residents live in an area with high Covid-19 transmission, but hospitalization and death rates are significantly higher in states with the lowest vaccination rates. In the 10 states with the lowest vaccination rates, fewer than 41% of their residents have been fully vaccinated. In the 10 states with the highest vaccination rates, more than 58% of their residents have been inoculated against coronavirus. Hospitalization rates in those bottom 10 states are nearly four times higher, and death rates are more than 5.5 times higher than in the top 10 states, according to a CNN analysis of federal data.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/18/health/us-coronavirus-wednesday/index.html>

U.S. decision on Covid-19 booster shots baffles — and upsets — some scientists

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Many flat-out challenged the need for booster doses at this time. Others questioned the morality of the decision.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/08/18/u-s-decision-on-covid-19-booster-shots-baffles-and-upsets-some-scientists/>

WHO: Warns against boosters before 1st vaccines

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Disney World is tweaking its face mask policy. Starting Thursday, the theme park resort in Florida will allow visitors to choose whether or not to wear face coverings in outdoor lines, outdoor theaters

and outdoor attractions. Masks had been required previously. Face coverings will remain optional in outdoor common areas. They will still be required for visitors age 2 and up at all indoor locations, such as restaurants, theaters and transportation with the exception of ferry boats. Disney World closed for two months last year at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and reopened more than a year ago with strict safety guidelines that involved masking, social distancing and crowd limits.

<https://apnews.com/article/europe-business-health-religion-coronavirus-pandemic-0801c217c6d2bbfa36f4e253f86ec42b>

Biden to require vaccines for nursing home staff

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The Biden administration will require that nursing home staff be vaccinated against COVID-19 as a condition for those facilities to continue receiving federal Medicare and Medicaid funding. Biden will announce the move Wednesday afternoon in a White House address as the administration continues to look for ways to use mandates to encourage vaccine holdouts to get shots. A senior administration official confirmed the announcement on condition of anonymity to preview the news before Biden's remarks. The new mandate, in the form of a forthcoming regulation to be issued by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, could take effect as soon as next month.

<https://apnews.com/article/business-health-coronavirus-pandemic-nursing-homes-2e6189cd41068b1e0f643ee7e4bfb92>

U.S. will extend COVID-19 transport mask mandate through Jan. 18

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President Joe Biden's administration confirmed late on Tuesday it plans to extend requirements for travelers to wear masks on airplanes, trains and buses and at airports and train stations through Jan. 18 to address ongoing COVID-19 risks. A Transportation Security Administration (TSA) spokesperson confirmed the extension, first reported by Reuters. "The purpose of TSA's mask directive is to minimize the spread of COVID-19 on public transportation," the spokesperson said

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/exclusive-us-expected-extend-transportation-mask-mandate-through-jan-18-sources-2021-08-17/>

Botswana's COVID-19 budget balloons as it battles for vaccines

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Botswana needs to budget an extra 1.13 billion pula (\$100 million) to help secure COVID-19 vaccines and equipment as the southern African country battles a third wave of infections, Finance Minister Peggy Serame told parliament on Tuesday. The extra money is almost triple the sum originally allocated in February to fight the coronavirus, but 70% of this money had already been depleted by July, Serame told lawmakers.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/botswanas-covid-19-budget-balloons-it-battles-vaccines-2021-08-17/>

Belgium to give booster coronavirus vaccines for immunocompromised

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Belgium will give third shots to people with a reduced immunity against the coronavirus, the government announced. The decision will allow between 300,000 and 400,000 people to get a third shot of an mRNA vaccine, either BioNTech/Pfizer or Moderna, this fall. Belgium is the latest country to move forward with third shots. Israel first began giving boosters this summer, while Hungary gave third shots to anyone who wants one in August. The U.S. is expected to soon follow suit.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/belgium-to-give-booster-coronavirus-vaccines-for-immunocompromised/>

Over 4.8bn coronavirus vaccine shots administered worldwide

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More than 4.8 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered worldwide, according to Our World in Data, a tracking website affiliated with Oxford University. Data shows that China, where the virus first emerged in late 2019, leads the global count with over 1.89 billion shots as of Wednesday. India comes second with more than 556.52 million jabs, followed by the US with 357.89 million, according to the latest figures. Brazil has administered over 168.16 million shots, Japan 113.35 million, Germany 98.27 million, and the UK 88.21 million.

<https://nation.com.pk/18-Aug-2021/over-4-8bn-coronavirus-vaccine-shots-administered-worldwide>

Thailand seeks 12 mln Sinovac shots for mix-and-match vax strategy

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Thailand will purchase an additional 12 million doses of Sinovac's coronavirus vaccine to try to expedite its rollout, a senior official said on Tuesday, despite concerns over its efficacy against the Delta variant of COVID-19. Thailand's strategy had planned to use mainly locally produced AstraZeneca (AZN.L) vaccines but with supply short of the government's target, Sinovac shots are being used in a mix-and-match approach to inoculate the population faster.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/thailand-reports-daily-record-239-new-coronavirus-deaths-2021-08-17/>

Pope Francis says getting coronavirus vaccine is 'act of love'

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Pope Francis is adding his voice to a campaign to overcome vaccine scepticism, issuing a public service announcement insisting that vaccines are safe, effective and an "act of love". The video message released on Wednesday is aimed at a global audience but directed particularly at the Americas.

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/world-news/pope-francis-says-getting-coronavirus-vaccine-is-act-of-love-40763638.html>

Norway to offer 16- and 17-year-olds COVID-19 vaccine, government says

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Norway will offer all 16- and 17-year-olds their first COVID-19 vaccine dose after those over 18 are fully vaccinated, the government said on Wednesday.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/norway-offer-16-17-year-olds-covid-19-vaccine-government-says-2021-08-18/>

Australia's Qantas tells employees: no jabs, no jobs

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Qantas Airways Ltd says it will require all its employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19 as part of its broader commitment to safety, in line with other airlines globally. Pilots, cabin crew and airport workers will need to be fully vaccinated by November 15, while other staff will have until March 31, 2022, the airline said on Wednesday.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/8/18/australias-qantas-tells-employees-no-jabs-no-jobs>

Austria sets a vaccine 'expiry date' for travellers

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Austria has become the second country to set an expiry date for Covid-19 vaccine passports, causing further confusion for travellers. On Tuesday the country announced that it is stamping a maximum validity period of 270 days - around nine months - on proof of vaccination, which is currently needed to visit the country. This means that UK travellers who received their second vaccine injection in January only have until October 2021 to visit the country before their vaccine passport is deemed invalid. "For single shot vaccines, you must show that you received the vaccine more than 21 but no more than 270 days before arrival," say the Foreign Office's new guidelines for entering Austria.

https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/austria-travel-covid-vaccine-expiry-b1904529.html?utm_content=Echobox&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1629286222

US COVID-19 vaccine booster program to begin Sep 20

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White House officials released details of their plan to deliver booster COVID-19 shots for all fully vaccinated US adults who completed their two-dose mRNA vaccination regimen at least 8 months prior. The booster program will begin the week of Sep 20. "It is now our clinical judgment that the time to put out a plan for boosters is now," said Vivek Murthy, MD, the US Surgeon General. "We have data that protection against moderate disease decreases over time." Murthy said the boosters will be contingent on the Food and Drug Administration authorizing the third dose.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/08/us-covid-19-vaccine-booster-program-begin-sep-20>

In Florida, Some Vaccine Skeptics Are Changing Their Minds

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In a rural stretch of northeastern Florida where barely half the people have gotten a coronavirus shot, Roger West had no problem telling others he was "adamantly anti-vaccination." The co-owner of the Westside Journal weekly newspaper used his voice as a columnist to widely share his doubts about the vaccine and his mistrust of the health experts in the U.S. who have been urging everyone to get it. "I do not trust the Federal Government," West wrote recently. "I do not trust Dr. Fauci, I do not trust the medical profession, nor the pharmaceutical giants."

<https://www.npr.org/2021/08/17/1028538495/florida-covid-vaccinations-skeptics-shots-changing-minds>

The lesson Greg Abbott should learn from having Covid-19 -- but won't

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Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, despite being fully vaccinated, announced on Tuesday that he has Covid-19. Even as that news was rippling through the state, the legal fight between Abbott and local officials over the state's ban on mask mandates raged on. Yes, you read that right. Even as Abbott was testing positive for Covid-19, his administration continued to work to keep local jurisdictions from requiring people to wear masks.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/18/politics/greg-abbott-covid-19-texas/index.html>

DeSantis top donor invests in COVID drug governor promotes

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Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis — who has been criticized for opposing mask mandates and vaccine passports — is now touting a COVID-19 antibody treatment in which a top donor's company has invested millions of dollars. DeSantis has been flying around the state promoting a monoclonal antibody treatment sold by Regeneron, which was used on then-President Donald Trump after he tested positive for COVID-19. The governor first began talking about it as a treatment last year. Citadel, a Chicago-based hedge fund, has \$15.9 million in shares of Regeneron Pharmaceutical Inc., according to filings with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. Citadel CEO Ken Griffin has donated \$10.75 million to a political committee that supports DeSantis — \$5.75 million in 2018 and \$5 million last April.

<https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-business-health-coronavirus-pandemic-4d0d18b24e0dd41de2424e19b3ed994f>

On the hunt for a 'universal' COVID-19 vaccine as Delta variant surges

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The prospect of a next-generation COVID-19 vaccine that could offer protection against future virus variants took a step closer to reality this week. The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) has agreed to provide \$20.6 million in funding to a six-year-old biotechnology company called

Gritstone, based in Emeryville, Calif., to help it test a “universal” COVID-19 vaccine. CEPI is a global partnership of governments and nongovernmental organizations dedicated to creating mechanisms for quickly combating pandemics. COVID-19 has been the first real test for the organization, which was established in 2016

<https://fortune.com/2021/08/18/universal-covid-vaccine-delta-variant-gritstone-cepi/>

CSL's Seqirus delivers record number of flu vaccines despite pandemic, and now it's eyeing next-gen mRNA shots

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Despite a global pandemic and social distancing measures threatening to hamper influenza vaccinations last season, CSL's Seqirus managed to deliver a record number of flu shots—and it's preparing to match that this season. For its U.S. market, the CDC switched its guidance and now advises that COVID-19 vaccines can be administered alongside flu vaccines, which could benefit flu vaccinations this fall since people can come in for both jabs at the same time. Seqirus also has its eyes on another vaccine platform: self-amplifying mRNA. In light of the highly effective mRNA shots against COVID-19 from Pfizer and Moderna, CSL is working on pushing out its own program it hopes will “address some of the challenges experienced with current generation mRNA vaccines,” CEO Paul Perreault said

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/despite-covid-19-lockdowns-csl-s-seqirus-reports-record-flu-shot-deliveries-plans-to-match>

Galderma tackles 'maskne,' one of many skin concerns exploding during pandemic

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It was the beauty trend of 2020 that no one wanted—maskne. The slang portmanteau referring to acne caused by mask wearing zoomed to the top of Google search trends not long after mandates rolled out. For dermatology brand Galderma, it was a chance to put its digital-first marketing strategy to work. The brand picked up on the trend through social listening and reached out to both healthcare professionals and consumers looking for solutions with messages about its retinoid gel brand Differin (adapalene).

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/marketing/galderma-tackles-maskne-one-many-skin-health-concerns-exploding-during-pandemic>

Pfizer COVID vaccine 86% effective after third shot - Maccabi

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The Pfizer coronavirus vaccine has been shown to be 86% effective in preventing infection among those ages 60 and older after a third dose, according to initial results published Wednesday by Maccabi Health Services. “The vaccine has again proved its effectiveness,” said Dr. Anat Ekka Zohar, who led the study. “It has also demonstrated protection against the Delta variant. The triple dose is the solution to curbing the current outbreak.”

<https://www.jpost.com/health-science/pfizer-covid-vaccine-86-percent-effective-after-third-shot-maccabi-677053>

How worried should we be about COVID-19 breakthrough infections?

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As the pandemic rages on, new buzzwords and phrases find their way into our daily vernacular – and one that is currently doing the rounds is “breakthrough infection”. This term refers to COVID-19 infections that occur more than 14 days after someone has been fully vaccinated; it does not refer to the severity of illness suffered from the disease but implies that a person has tested positive for the virus.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2021/8/18/how-worried-should-we-be-about-covid-19-breakthrough-infections>

WHO warns of increasing disease including Covid in Afghanistan

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The World Health Organisation has warned of an "immediate need" to ensure health services across Afghanistan are maintained as it warned of increasing cases of Covid-19 symptoms and other health problems across the country. In the chaos of the fall of Kabul on Sunday the WHO said many Afghans had fled to the city in the days running up to the Taliban's takeover, with health officials now reporting an increase in disease and a risk of outbreaks that could affect vulnerable people.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/asia/south-asia/afghanistan-covid-health-disease-who-b1904587.html>

Japanese regions see record COVID-19 infections as Delta variant spreads -media

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Record COVID-19 cases sprang up across Japan on Wednesday, media said a day after the government expanded emergency measures to fight a wave fuelled by the infectious Delta variant that has put the medical system under threat. The western prefecture of Osaka reported a record 2,296 cases. Neighbouring Hyogo, the central prefecture of Aichi, and Fukuoka prefecture in the south all set records of more than 1,000 new infections, media said. Tokyo's 5,386 daily cases were just off last Friday's all-time high.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japanese-regions-see-record-covid-19-infections-delta-variant-spreads-media-2021-08-18/>

'It's soul-draining': Health workers deployed to Covid hot zones are overwhelmed by deaths among the unvaccinated

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As part of an emergency response team maintained by the federal government, the 59-year-old nurse has deployed more than a dozen times during the Covid-19 pandemic, to hospitals, clinics, and even cruise ships. It seemed impossible that the death rituals that have defined her nightmarish 18-month world tour could become more grim. But the current wave, and the utter needlessness of the patient suffering Ingle bears witness to each day, are more devastating than ever

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/08/18/health-workers-overwhelmed-covid-deaths-among-unvaccinated/>

Delta surging in areas of low COVID-19 vaccine coverage - WHO

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Circulation of the Delta variant in areas of low vaccination is driving transmission of COVID-19 around the world, World Health Organization officials said on Wednesday. "Many of the places around the world where Delta is surging -- even in countries that at a national level have high levels of vaccination coverage -- the virus, the Delta variant itself, is really circulating in areas of low level of vaccine coverage and in the context of very limited and inconsistent use of public health and social measures," WHO epidemiologist Maria Van Kerkhove told an online news briefing.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/delta-surging-areas-low-covid-19-vaccine-coverage-who-2021-08-18/>

Covid hospital patient numbers hit five-month high in England

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More coronavirus patients are currently in hospital in England than at any other time in the last five months, NHS data shows. On Wednesday, more than 5,500 people with Covid-19 were in hospital - a jump of 9 per cent from last week, according to PA news agency, and the highest level since mid-March. But although hospitalisations have begun to climb in recent days, numbers remain low compared to the peaks of the UK's first and second waves, when fewer people were fully vaccinated.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/covid-hospital-patient-numbers-england-b1904881.html>

French patients in ICUs for COVID-19 above 2000 for first time since June 14

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French health authorities reported on Wednesday that the number of patients being treated in intensive care units (ICUs) for COVID-19 has risen above 2,000 for the first time since June 14. That figure has more than doubled in less than a month as the highly contagious Delta variant of the coronavirus is putting a renewed strain on the French hospital system

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/french-patients-icus-covid-19-above-2000-first-time-since-june-14-2021-08-18/>

Sydney warned worse to come as Delta cases surge

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Sydney reports record 633 new daily cases. More vaccines for worst-affected suburbs. Defence to help ramp up vaccination in remote towns

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/australias-victoria-reports-24-local-covid-19-cases-2021-08-17/>

Covid-19 news: New Zealand begins nationwide lockdown

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New Zealand has begun a nationwide lockdown in a bid to contain the delta variant of the coronavirus. So far 10 cases have been confirmed in the outbreak, but modelling suggests the numbers could rise to between 50 and 100. "From the experience of what we've seen overseas, we are absolutely anticipating more cases," prime minister Jacinda Ardern said. The level 4 alert, the highest level, means people other than essential workers can only leave home for groceries, healthcare, covid-19 tests and exercise. The lockdown will cover the entire country for at least three days, and remain in place in Auckland for a week. New Zealand had been free of local covid-19 infections since February, and only 21 per cent of the total population has been fully vaccinated.

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2237475-covid-19-news-new-zealand-begins-nationwide-lockdown/>

U.S. reports more than 1,000 COVID deaths in single day

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The United States reported more than 1,000 COVID-19 deaths on Tuesday, equating to around 42 fatalities an hour, according to a Reuters tally, as the Delta variant continues to ravage parts of the country with low vaccination rates. Coronavirus-related deaths have spiked in the United States over the past month and are averaging 769 per day, the highest since mid-April, according to the Reuters tally. President Joe Biden's administration confirmed on Tuesday evening it planned to extend requirements for travelers to wear masks on airplanes, trains and buses and at airports and train stations until mid-January

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-reports-more-than-1000-covid-deaths-single-day-2021-08-18/>

Now, an Indian covid-19 vaccine made from plants?

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Scientists in India plan to shortly begin clinical trials of a plant-based vaccine against covid-19, which could become one of the world's first such vaccines against the deadly disease. A senior official at India's plant genome research body said scientists are studying the plant *Nicotiana benthamiana*, a relative of tobacco, to develop a platform to make covid-related antigens to trigger immune response against the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes covid-19. Three research groups at the National Institute of Plant Genome Research (NIPGR), New Delhi, under the department of biotechnology, ministry of science and technology, in association with the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) in New Delhi, are working on the project.

<https://www.livemint.com/science/health/indian-scientists-to-start-clinical-trials-of-plant-based-covid-shots-11629313754199.html>