

# COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

## 1st Feb 2022

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### Lockdown Exit

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#### **Thailand Ready for Rush of Tourists With Quarantine-Free Visas**

Thailand expects to welcome hundreds of thousands of holidaymakers a month with the kickoff of a quarantine-free visa program that's set to serve as a model for tourism-reliant countries balancing safe border reopenings with economic revival. Starting Tuesday, visitors of any nationality can apply for quarantine-free entry into Thailand, provided they are fully vaccinated. The government expects between 200,000 and 300,000 travelers to take advantage of the so-called Test & Go program in February alone, with the numbers expected to swell in the following months.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-31/thailand-ready-for-rush-of-tourists-with-quarantine-free-visas>

#### **U.S. Treasury economist sees inflation pressures easing if pandemic recedes**

U.S. inflationary pressures should ease in 2022 due to weaker demand for goods, easing supply bottlenecks and a receding coronavirus pandemic, the U.S. Treasury's top economist said on Monday. In a statement released alongside the Treasury's quarterly borrowing estimates, Assistant Secretary for Economic Policy Ben Harris said he expects energy prices to stabilize in 2022, but geopolitical instability could push prices higher. Harris said the course of the pandemic remains a primary downside risk to the U.S. economic outlook, along with supply chain disruptions, high energy prices and housing costs.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/finance/us-treasury-economist-sees-inflation-pressure-easing-if-pandemic-recedes-2022-01-31/>

#### **Johnson vows changes after lockdown parties report condemns UK leadership failures**

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson faced renewed calls to resign on Monday after a report found that alcohol-fuelled events at his offices and residence when COVID-19 lockdown rules were in force should never have taken place. The report by senior civil servant Sue Gray into the lockdown gatherings, which occurred when Britons were all but banned from social mixing under coronavirus restrictions, pointed to "serious failures of leadership" at the heart of the British government. She condemned some of the behaviour in government as being "difficult to justify", saying "the excessive consumption of alcohol is not appropriate in a professional workplace at any time".

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-pm-johnson-receives-report-into-potential-downing-street-lockdown-breaches-2022-01-31/>

#### **England plans to revoke mandatory COVID jabs for health workers**

The British government plans to revoke its decision to make COVID-19 vaccination mandatory for health workers in England after warnings that an already-stretched service could face serious staff shortages. The policy would have required employees in the state-run National Health Service and social care workers to be fully vaccinated by April 1. This means they would have to receive their first shot this week to meet that deadline.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-could-change-mandatory-covid-vaccination-nhs-staff-minister-2022-01-31/>

#### **'Felt like a bullet': Bhutan PM mourns kingdom's rare COVID death**

Bhutan's success in avoiding coronavirus is almost unrivalled but a rare patient death – just the kingdom's fourth – shows more work was needed to fight the pandemic there, its leader says. The remote Himalayan nation of around 800,000 people, sandwiched between China and India, has recorded fewer COVID-19 fatalities than almost anywhere else in the world.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/31/felt-like-bullet-bhutan-pm-mourns-rare-covid-death>

### **Report slams lockdown parties by Boris Johnson and staff**

Prime Minister Boris Johnson apologized Monday after an inquiry found that Downing Street parties while Britain was in lockdown represented a “serious failure” to observe the standards expected of government or to heed the sacrifices made by millions of people during the pandemic. Johnson brushed off calls to quit over the “partygate” scandal, promising to reform the way his office is run and insisting that he and his government can be trusted. But he faced criticism from some of his own Conservative colleagues, who have the power to oust a leader some fear has become damaged goods. One Conservative lawmaker accused the prime minister of taking him for “a fool.” “I get it, and I will fix it,” Johnson said in Parliament after senior civil servant Sue Gray published interim findings on several gatherings in 2020 and 2021 while the U.K. was under government-imposed restrictions to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

<https://apnews.com/article/boris-johnson-partygate-report-0cc714677ec8f8450568c872b12a9bdc>

### **Omicron Pushes Health Authorities Toward Learning to Live With Covid-19**

The Omicron variant spreads so quickly and generally causes such a mild form of illness among vaccinated populations that countries are tolerating greater Covid-19 outbreaks, willingly letting infections balloon to levels that not long ago would have been treated as public-health crises. From different starting points, authorities in North America, Europe and the Asia-Pacific are moving in the same direction, offering a glimpse into a future in which Covid-19 becomes accepted as a fact of everyday life, like seasonal flu. Health officials everywhere, many for the first time, are forgoing some of the sharpest tools they have to combat Omicron—even as infections soar. They are accepting the virus like never before to minimize disruptions to economies, education and everyday life.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/omicron-pushes-health-authorities-toward-learning-to-live-with-covid-19-11643537865>

### **This map is the key to when US might start easing Covid-19 restrictions**

Denmark has decided to lift all Covid-19 restrictions within the country, Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen announced Wednesday evening, adding that Covid-19 “should no longer be categorized as a socially critical sickness.” “Denmark will be completely open from 1 February,” Frederiksen said. “Tonight we can start lowering our shoulders and find our smiles again. “The pandemic is still here, but with what we know now, we dare to believe that we are through the critical phase,” Frederiksen added, highlighting the success of Denmark’s vaccination program and booster shots.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/31/health/easing-covid-restrictions-pandemic-end-explainer/index.html>

### **Experts say the COVID-19 emergency could end this year. What would it look like?**

On the cusp of the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States is battling back the biggest surge of the virus yet with the omicron variant. Cases, even while receding in some places, are near record levels. And daily deaths, while lower than the peak of last winter, are still averaging more than 2,000 nationwide. Despite pitched battles over masks and vaccines, life appears somewhat normal in many respects -- kids are going to school, people are going into work and large indoor gatherings and events are being held.

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/experts-covid-19-emergency-end-year/story?id=82464470>

### **Indonesia says Bali to reopen to foreign travellers, again**

Indonesia’s holiday island of Bali will start welcoming back travellers from all countries from later this week, officials said on Monday, more than three months after announcing it was open to selected nationalities. Though Bali officially opened to visitors from China, New Zealand, and Japan among other countries in mid October, there has since been no direct flights, Tourism minister Sandiaga Uno told a briefing. The reopening follows similar announcements by Thailand and the Philippines, which put quarantine waivers on hold in December over initial uncertainty about vaccine

efficacy against the Omicron variant of COVID-19.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/indonesia-says-bali-reopen-foreign-travellers-again-2022-01-31/>

### **Give back the money, UK tells COVID fraudsters**

Britain's public spending chief on Monday urged fraudsters who swindled billions of dollars of COVID support money from the state to give the cash back. Chief Secretary to the Treasury Simon Clarke said the tax service, known in Britain as HM Revenue & Customs, would pursue anyone who had taken money fraudulently. "We will now pursue anybody who has taken this money fraudulently," Clarke told LBC radio. "And I would urge anyone who's taken that money and didn't really need it to make contact with HMRC."

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/give-back-money-uk-tells-covid-fraudsters-2022-01-31/>

### **Clinics in Moscow now offering Sputnik M vaccines to 12-17s**

The Russian capital on Monday has started offering a domestically developed coronavirus vaccine to children in the 12-17 age group amid the country's biggest infection surge yet due to the spread of the highly contagious omicron variant.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-business-moscow-russia-f22fde3d7e8e3a8f42c3f3d32aa3a709>

## **Exit Strategies**

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### **Omicron Dashes China's Hopes of Winter Olympics Boosting Economy**

China's Winter Olympics may be more of a drag on Beijing's regional economy than a boost, as virus flare-ups and pollution curbs weigh on consumer and industrial activity. A ban on public spectators means there won't be the usual bump up in tourism and consumption that a city hopes to gain from hosting the international games. Tighter controls to contain the outbreaks of two virus variants are keeping holidaymakers away. And restrictions on polluting industries to ensure there are clear skies over the capital during the games means steel plants are curbing output

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-31/omicron-dashes-china-s-hopes-of-winter-olympics-boosting-economy>

### **U.S. CDC warns against travel to Mexico, Brazil, Singapore over COVID-19**

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Monday advised against travel to a dozen countries because of high rates of coronavirus infection, including Mexico, Brazil, Singapore, Ecuador, Kosovo, Philippines and Paraguay. The CDC now lists nearly 130 countries and territories with COVID-19 cases as "Level Four: Very High." It also added Anguilla, French Guiana, Moldova and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to its highest level on Monday. The U.S. State Department also raised its travel advisory for Mexico and some of the other nations listed by the CDC to "Level 4: Do Not Travel."

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-cdc-warns-against-travel-mexico-brazil-singapore-over-covid-19-2022-01-31/>

### **Mandatory Covid-19 vaccines for NHS and social care staff 'could be scrapped'**

The government is reportedly expected to perform a U-turn on its mandatory Covid-19 vaccination policy for NHS and social care staff in England. It comes after the health and social care secretary announced last week that he was "reflecting" on the plans in wake of the implications of staff shortages from Omicron

<https://www.nursingtimes.net/news/coronavirus/mandatory-covid-19-vaccines-for-nhs-and-social-care-staff-could-be-scrapped-31-01-2022/>

### **COVID-19: Boris Johnson says health secretary will provide update on mandatory jabs for health workers amid U-turn speculation**

Boris Johnson has said the health secretary will be saying more later about mandatory coronavirus vaccinations for NHS staff and social care workers, amid speculation the policy could be scrapped.

Health workers in England were meant to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by April, but Sajid Javid has been under growing pressure to get rid of the rule.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-boris-johnson-says-health-secretary-will-provide-update-on-mandatory-jabs-for-health-workers-amid-u-turn-speculation-12529281>

### **Taiwan tries hand at COVID diplomacy again with Somaliland vaccine gift**

Article reports that Taiwan's gift of 150,000 doses of its domestically developed Medigen COVID-19 vaccine has arrived in Somalia's breakaway Somaliland region, the Taiwanese foreign ministry said on Monday, part of the island's renewed pandemic diplomacy push. Taiwan has donated millions of face masks and other goods around the world in what the government has called the "Taiwan can help, Taiwan is helping" programme to show the island is a responsible member of the international community, despite being locked out of most global bodies because of China's objections.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taiwan-tries-hand-covid-diplomacy-again-with-somaliland-vaccine-gift-2022-01-31/>

### **Falling U.S. Hospitalizations, Infections Bolster Hope Omicron Wave Is Waning**

The Food and Drug Administration on Monday gave its full approval to Moderna Inc.'s Covid-19 vaccine, branded Spikevax, for use in adults 18 and older, making it the second fully approved Covid-19 vaccine after one from Pfizer Inc. and BioNTech SE. The agency granted full approval to Moderna's shot after conducting a more thorough review of the evidence for the vaccine's safety and efficacy. Previously, the FDA had granted what is known as an emergency-use authorization for Moderna's vaccine in December 2020, following a shorter-than-normal review of the shot. The FDA may grant such authorizations during public-health emergencies such as the continuing pandemic.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/falling-u-s-hospitalizations-infections-bolster-hope-omicron-wave-is-waning-11643636428>

### **Face Masks Are Now Part of Spain's Inflation Basket**

Spain has included the cost of face masks in its list of articles to gauge inflation, in the latest example of the far-reaching impact of the pandemic. The consumer price index basket is revised periodically and updated to "include new products whose consumption starts to be significant," the national statistics institute said in a statement Monday. It also added online newspaper subscriptions, while dropping DVDs and compact discs. Masks are widely worn in Spain, and are mandatory in most indoor public spaces. In late December, with the omicron variant surging, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez reinstated a rule ordering masks to be used outdoors. The order is pending parliamentary approval.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-31/face-masks-are-now-part-of-spain-s-inflation-basket?srnd=premium-europe>

### **F1 to Mandate Covid-19 Vaccines for All Staff**

Formula One staff must be fully vaccinated against Covid-19 under new FIA rules. The policy drawn up by the sport's governing body will be written into the regulations for the new season and will apply to all drivers, teams, media and hospitality guests. It is expected that no exemptions will be granted. The sport hopes the rule will avoid a repeat of the Novak Djokovic fiasco which overshadowed the build-up to this month's Australian Open. All of the grid's current drivers are understood to be vaccinated. An F1 spokesperson said: "Formula One management will require all travelling personnel to be fully vaccinated and will not request exemptions."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-31/f1-to-mandate-covid-19-vaccines-for-all-staff>

### **Germany misses 80% COVID-19 vaccination rate target**

The German government has failed to hit its goal of vaccinating 80% of the population against the coronavirus before the end of January, roughly a month before lawmakers are expected to vote on a draft law on mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations. As of Monday, 75.8% of Germans have received at

least one vaccine dose, which places the country behind European peers such as Italy, France and Spain, according to data from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. German government spokesperson Steffen Hebestreit did not name a new target date for the 80% goal but said the aim was to raise the vaccination rate going ahead.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germany-misses-80-covid-19-vaccination-rate-target-2022-01-31/>

### **Australia offers aged care labour incentive amid COVID crisis**

Australia's federal government will offer extra payments to aged care staff as over 1,200 nursing homes deal with COVID-19 outbreaks that have caused hundreds of deaths of elderly residents this year and staff shortages. There is growing concern over the impact of the Omicron variant outbreak on elderly Australians living in residential care homes, as the pandemic in the wider community peaks. On Sunday, 31 out of 52 deaths from the virus reported by New South Wales, were aged care residents.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/australia-offers-aged-care-labour-incentive-amid-covid-crisis-2022-01-31/>

### **China punishes cold-chain managers for 'obstructing' COVID prevention**

Investigations into China's cold-chain sector have led to several managers, officials and business owners being punished for failing to meet COVID-19 prevention standards, the country's corruption watchdog said in a notice. The Beijing branch of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) accused several people involved in the cold storage business of management and supervisory failures when it came to controlling COVID-19. It accused one manager in an industrial park in southwest Beijing of "poor leadership and non-standard management that led to the spread of the epidemic".

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-punishes-cold-chain-managers-obstructing-covid-prevention-2022-01-31/>

## **Partisan Exits**

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### **Spotify to link COVID content to facts after 'misinformation' row**

Music streaming company Spotify says it will start guiding listeners of podcasts discussing COVID-19 to facts about the pandemic, after artists, including Neil Young, pulled their songs from the platform in anger at alleged misinformation. In a post on Sunday, Spotify Chief Executive Daniel Ek laid out more transparent platform rules given the backlash stirred up by Young after the tech giant declined to get rid of episodes of The Joe Rogan Experience, which has been criticised for spreading virus misinformation.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/31/spotify-to-link-covid-content-to-facts-after-misinformation-row>

### **Top Hong Kong official resigns over birthday party fiasco**

A top Hong Kong official resigned Monday for attending a birthday party with about 200 guests in early January as the city was battling a coronavirus surge. At least one guests later tested positive, and Secretary of Home Affairs Caspar Tsui was among several officials and lawmakers ordered to quarantine after the party, which was held for Witman Hung, a delegate to China's legislature. Tsui said in a statement issued Monday afternoon that he had not "set the best example during the recent outbreak." At the time, Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam and health officials had urged the public to avoid large gatherings to prevent the spread of the virus.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-business-health-china-hong-kong-1b20b1eb747285b89bb97e7f9f6fac61>

### **Spotify promises to tackle Covid-19 misinformation following pressure from Duke and Duchess of Sussex**

A spokesperson for Prince Harry and Meghan's Archewell organisation confirmed that the couple had expressed 'concerns to our partners' at Spotify last April, raising the issue of 'the all too real consequences of Covid-19 misinformation on its platform'. He said Archewell continued to voice

'concerns to Spotify to ensure changes to its platform are made to help address this public health crisis', adding: 'We look to Spotify to meet this moment and are committed to continuing our work together.'

<https://www.tatler.com/article/spotify-tackle-covid-19-misinformation-harry-meghan-joe-rogan-neil-young>

### **Laurence Fox ignores doctor advising him against Ivermectin for Covid-19 treatment**

Laurence Fox has attempted to shut down a doctor who offered him professional medical advice after he contracted Covid-19. The controversial actor and failed London mayoral candidate tested positive for coronavirus on Sunday (30 January), just days after sharing a photo wearing a t-shirt that read: "No vaccine needed. I have an immune system." Palliative care doctor and author Rachel Clarke shared a news story about Fox getting Covid and wished him a "speedy recovery", while warning that his chosen medication of Ivermectin was not recommended by medical experts. "It's important to stress there is no clear evidence that Ivermectin (a horse de-wormer) reduces the risks of catching Covid, or its severity," Clarke wrote, adding, before adding: "We do have excellent evidence-based Covid treatments, though."

<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/laurence-fox-ivermectin-covid-rachel-clarke-b2004051.html>

### **Report criticises lockdown parties at UK PM Johnson's office**

UK PM Johnson receives report into Downing Street lockdown parties By ReutersInvesting.com UKFactbox-Key Findings From UK Lockdown Party ReportU.S. News & World ReportUK PM Johnson receives report into potential Downing Street lockdown breachesNasdaqView Full coverage on Google News

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-pm-johnson-receives-report-into-potential-downing-street-lockdown-breaches-2022-01-31/>

### **Joe Rogan Says Sorry as Spotify Tries to End Covid Vaccine Controversy**

Joe Rogan pledged more balance and better research for his podcast in an apology aimed at quelling growing controversy about misleading coronavirus information that plunged Spotify Technology SA into controversy last week. "If I've p---ed you off, I'm sorry," Rogan said in an Instagram video, while also thanking listeners who have enjoyed his podcast. He said he would "try harder to get people with differing opinions on right afterward" and "do my best to make sure I have researched these topics, the controversial ones in particular, and have all the pertinent facts at hand before I discuss them."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-31/joe-rogan-says-sorry-as-spotify-seeks-to-end-vaccine-controversy>

### **Hong Kong home affairs chief resigns after COVID-hit birthday bash scandal**

Hong Kong's Secretary for Home Affairs resigned on Monday weeks after attending the birthday party of a delegate to China's legislature, where two of some 200 guests tested positive for COVID-19. Caspar Tsui was among 15 officials who went to the 53rd birthday of Witman Hung, a city delegate to the national legislature, before new COVID-19 restrictions came into force, but after Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam appealed to people to avoid big gatherings. Tsui "brought the Hong Kong government into disrepute" and "did not meet the expectations of the general public", Lam told a news conference.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/hong-kong-home-affairs-chief-caspar-tsui-resigns-2022-01-31/>

### **Cyprus Orthodox archbishop suspends 12 unvaccinated priests**

The head of Cyprus' Orthodox Christian Church said Sunday that he will suspend a dozen priests from his diocese because they refused to heed his call to get vaccinated against COVID-19. Archbishop Chryostomos II told state broadcaster CyBC that most of the priests are also theologians who have swayed some of the faithful not to get vaccinated. The archbishop called the

insubordination “unheard of” and warned that the suspensions could be extended to six months or lead to the priests being defrocked. He suggested that some of the unvaccinated priests may be emboldened to defy him because of his frail health. Archbishop Chrysostomos has been vocal in his support for vaccinations for all the faithful and the Church’s highest decision making body, the Holy Synod, has issued a clear appeal in favor of vaccination.

<https://apnews.com/d2277bcc5f9f749f854413a0681c7762>

### **Ottawa police investigating some anti vaccine protesters**

Police in Canada’s capital said Sunday they are investigating possible criminal charges after anti-vaccine protesters urinated on the National War Memorial, danced on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and used the statue of Canadian hero Terry Fox to display an anti-vaccine statement. Thousands of protesters gathered in Ottawa Saturday to protest vaccine mandates, masks and lockdowns. Some travelled in truck convoys and parked on the streets around Parliament Hill, blocking traffic. Many remained on Sunday. Ottawa Police said officers are also investigating threatening behavior to police and others. “Several criminal investigations are underway in relation the desecration of the National War Memorial/Terry Fox statue,” Ottawa police said.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-canada-ontario-ottawa-dfae7b60cf457204f48b3afe4417e5f6>

### **Rogan responds to Spotify protest, COVID advisories**

Spotify is pledging to combat the spread of COVID-19 misinformation as part of a damage-control campaign sparked by musician Neil Young, who called out the streaming service’s top podcaster for amplifying vaccine skepticism. Spotify said Sunday it will soon add a warning before all podcasts that discuss COVID-19, directing listeners to factual, up-to-date information from scientists and public health experts. The company also sought to increase transparency about its publishing decisions by laying out the rules it uses to protect users’ safety. Young had his music removed from Spotify last week after the company declined to get rid of episodes of “The Joe Rogan Experience,” which he criticized for spreading virus misinformation.

<https://apnews.com/article/spotify-joe-rogan-covid-advisories-435f6efc51f4d4c94587f1b4ffe5f5be3>

## **Scientific Viewpoint**

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### **Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine receives full FDA approval for Americans aged 18 and older**

The Moderna Covid-19 vaccine has received full FDA approval for use in all U.S. adults. It is the second vaccine to receive full approval for use in America, joining Pfizer's shot. Approval only applies to the first two shots and the booster dose remains only available under emergency use orders. Without this approval, the jab would only be available under situations of emergency, but now it can be used even beyond the pandemic

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-10460639/Modernas-COVID-19-vaccine-receives-FDA-approval-Americans-aged-18-older.html>

### **Japan's Kowa says ivermectin showed 'antiviral effect' against Omicron in research**

Japanese trading and pharmaceuticals company Kowa Co Ltd said that anti-parasite drug ivermectin showed an "antiviral effect" against Omicron and other coronavirus variants in joint non-clinical research. The company, which has been working with Tokyo's Kitasato University on testing the drug as a potential treatment for COVID-19, did not provide further details. The original Reuters story misstated that ivermectin was "effective" against Omicron in Phase III clinical trials, which are conducted in humans. Clinical trials are ongoing, but promotion of ivermectin as a COVID-19 treatment has generated controversy.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/japans-kowa-says-ivermectin-effective-against-omicron-phase-iii-trial-2022-01-31/>

## **The New Clues About Who Will Develop Long Covid**

Asthma. Unhealthy gut bacteria. The presence of autoantibodies, usually associated with autoimmune conditions. These are among the risk factors identified in new studies as potentially making someone at greater risk of developing long Covid, a condition in which wide-ranging symptoms such as fatigue, brain fog and racing heart rate persist months after an initial Covid-19 infection. The studies help advance scientists' understanding of the biology behind long Covid, and provide clues to potential treatments. Patients with autoantibodies, for instance, might get relief from existing treatments for lupus, an autoimmune disease. The variety of reasons one person might get long Covid and another might not also reinforce scientists' increasing belief that there won't be a single cause or treatment for the condition.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-new-clues-about-who-will-develop-long-covid-11643625003>

### **Merck's COVID pill is last choice for U.S. patients, global use varies**

Merck & Co's new antiviral pill, once touted as a potential game changer for treating COVID-19, is the last choice among four available options for at-risk patients given its relatively low efficacy and potential safety issues, U.S. doctors, healthcare systems and pharmacies told Reuters. A rival oral treatment from Pfizer Inc, Paxlovid, is in high demand, followed by an intravenous antibody therapy made by GlaxoSmithKline and Vir Biotechnology. With supplies of those products tight, doctors facing a surge of cases caused by the Omicron variant are also turning to Gilead Sciences Inc's remdesivir, an antiviral that needs to be given as three daily infusions to help high-risk COVID patients avoid hospitalization.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/mercks-covid-pill-is-last-choice-us-patients-global-use-varies-2022-01-31/>

### **Omicron amps up concerns about long COVID and its causes**

More than a year after a bout with COVID-19, Rebekah Hogan still suffers from severe brain fog, pain and fatigue that leave her unable to do her nursing job or handle household activities. Long COVID has her questioning her worth as a wife and mother. "Is this permanent? Is this the new norm?" said the 41-year-old Latham, New York, woman, whose three children and husband also have signs of the condition. "I want my life back." More than a third of COVID-19 survivors by some estimates will develop such lingering problems. Now, with omicron sweeping across the globe, scientists are racing to pinpoint the cause of the bedeviling condition and find treatments before a potential explosion in long COVID cases.

<https://apnews.com/article/long-covid-omicron-research-45986f5b42e47e656d5b385bd51b2bb2>

### **Covid-Infected HIV Patient Developed Mutations, Study Shows**

A South African woman suffering from inadequately treated HIV, and who harbored Covid-19 for nine months saw the respiratory virus develop at least 21 mutations while in her body, according to a study. Once the 22-year-old adhered to the anti-retroviral medication used to treat HIV and her immune system strengthened she was able to overcome the Covid-19 infection within six to nine weeks, the study, led by scientists from Stellenbosch and the University of KwaZulu-Natal showed. The research has not been peer reviewed. The study adds to evidence that Covid-19 may mutate rapidly when harbored by immunosuppressed individuals, such as those not taking medication to treat HIV, and this may lead to the development of new variants. The beta variant, which the patient in the study was infected with, was discovered in South Africa, as was omicron.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-30/covid-infected-hiv-patient-developed-21-mutations-study-shows>

## **Coronavirus Resurgence**

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### **Queensland records three new COVID-19 deaths and 7,462 new cases, hospitalisation rate trending down**

Another three Queenslanders have died with COVID-19, taking the total number of deaths in the

state since the coronavirus pandemic began to 199. The state has recorded 7,462 new cases in the latest reporting period. There are 744 people in hospital being treated for COVID. That includes 46 patients in hospital in intensive care. Chief Health Officer John Gerrard said of the three people who had died with COVID-19, one was in their 60s, one in their 80s and one in their 90s. Two had received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine and one had also received a booster shot.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-01-31/queensland-coronavirus-covid19-deaths-cases/100790788>

### **Russia reports fresh record of daily COVID cases**

Russia reported a record daily number of COVID-19 cases on Monday as the Omicron variant of coronavirus spread across the country, authorities said. New daily cases jumped to 124,070, up from 121,228 a day earlier. The government coronavirus task force also reported 621 deaths in the last 24 hours.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-reports-fresh-record-daily-covid-cases-2022-01-31/>

### **2022 Winter Olympics: Beijing Logs Covid Cases Faster Than Tokyo**

Beijing identified more than 100 coronavirus infections over the past three days among those in China for the Winter Olympics, taking the cumulative number of cases to 248 with four days to go before the opening ceremony. At an average of 36 new cases a day, the increase has more than doubled the three-day average for Jan. 25-27 period. The total count already exceeds the number of infections Tokyo had in the run-up to the summer games last year, which were held before the more infectious omicron variant began to circulate. The Japanese capital tallied 121 Olympic-related cases in the three weeks before its opening ceremony.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-31/beijing-olympics-covid-cases-mounting-at-faster-pace-than-tokyo>

### **Hong Kong's Covid-Zero Strategy Is on the Brink of Collapse**

Hong Kong has never been closer to losing its Covid-Zero battle. As residents prepare for another Chinese New Year under Covid-19 restrictions, omicron seems to have gotten the better of the city's defenses, with a record number of new and untraceable infections. Though the city has beaten back four previous waves of infection, returning to no Covid cases will be much harder this time, given it's facing omicron, the most infectious and immune-evasive of variants.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-31/hong-kong-s-covid-zero-disintegrates-under-omicron-s-onslaught>

### **COVID-19 cases mount among Olympic athletes, personnel arriving in Beijing**

China has detected some 119 cases of COVID-19 among athletes and personnel linked to the Beijing Winter Olympics, with authorities imposing a "closed loop" bubble to keep participants, staff and media separated from the public.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-reports-37-new-covid-19-cases-among-olympics-personnel-jan-30-2022-01-31/>

### **Australia reports fewer COVID-19 deaths, infections as students return to schools**

Australia reported its lowest daily COVID-19 deaths in two weeks on Monday while cases continued to trend lower as authorities braced for staff shortages in schools due to likely outbreaks as thousands of students return after their summer break. Most states will go through a staggered school reopening exercise this week as Australia battles the worst outbreak of the pandemic, with the fast-moving Omicron coronavirus variant spiralling cases to record levels.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/australia-reports-fewer-covid-19-deaths-infections-students-return-schools-2022-01-31/>

## **New Lockdown**

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**Beijing seals off several communities over two cases of Covid-19**

Beijing officials have sealed off several residential communities north of the city centre after two cases of Covid-19 were found as the Chinese capital prepares to host the Winter Olympics opening ceremony on Friday. Another 34 cases were confirmed among athletes and others who have come for the Games, the organising committee said. In all, 211 people have tested positive among more than 8,000 who had arrived by the end of Saturday. They include a Swedish cross-country skier and a snowboarder from Slovenia. Everyone coming for the Olympics is being isolated from the general public for the duration of their stay in China to try to prevent cross-infection.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/31/beijing-seals-off-several-communities-over-two-cases-of-covid-19>