

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

20th Apr 2022

Lockdown Exit

Omicron Covid Wave Hit Unvaccinated Children Hardest: CDC

Almost 90% of U.S. children hospitalized for Covid during the omicron wave this winter were unvaccinated, according to a government study. Omicron caused a record-breaking number of pediatric hospitalizations from December to February, and national data on hundreds of kids aged 5 to 11 highlight the importance of vaccinating them, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in the report. "Increasing vaccination coverage among children, particularly among racial and ethnic minority groups disproportionately affected by Covid-19, is critical to preventing Covid-19-associated hospitalization and severe outcomes," the CDC said.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-19/unvaccinated-kids-bore-brunt-of-omicron-wave-cdc-report-says>

UK PM Johnson apologises to parliament over lockdown breaches

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson apologised to parliament on Tuesday after he was fined by police for breaking lockdown rules, saying he did not know a birthday gathering at the height of the pandemic was in breach of the rules he had set. Opposition lawmakers argue that the prime minister must go, saying he set stringent rules during COVID-19, broke those rules in Downing Street and then repeatedly lied to parliament when he said all guidelines had been met.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uks-johnson-apologise-parliament-over-lockdown-fine-2022-04-19/>

First COVID, now floods empty South Africa's eastern beach resorts

After two years of the COVID-19 pandemic keeping tourists away, South African resorts along the popular eastern Indian Ocean coastline were hoping for a bumper Easter weekend. But torrential rain last week triggered floods and mudslides, killing more than 440 people, knocking out power and water supplies and covering the beaches in and around the main port city of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal province, with debris. Some hotels had a third of bookings cancelled and others were forced to close during what is normally the second-busiest time of the year.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/first-covid-now-floods-empty-south-africas-eastern-beach-resorts-2022-04-19/>

COVID-19 vaccines go to waste as rollout stalls

Australian medical professionals are speaking out about mass amounts of COVID-19 vaccine wastage, calling for more government direction in donating the vaccines to developing countries. It comes as GPs are reportedly throwing out thousands of expired vaccines due to dwindling demand. More than 95 per cent of Australians over the age of 16 have received two doses, and about 300,000 vaccines are administered nationally each week.

<https://www.9news.com.au/national/expiring-vaccines-should-be-donated-before-they-expire-doctors-say/e505a3a5-34d7-4dcb-b9d0-0fb48f5d68e4>

Rise in at-home testing means we could be undercounting Covid-19 cases even more than before

As the number of Covid-19 cases grows in the United States, experts wonder if the country fully understands the current threat from the pandemic. The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation estimates that only 7% of positive Covid-19 cases in the US are being detected, meaning case rates are actually 14.5 times higher than officially reported. The last time the infection detection rate was this low was at the outset of the pandemic, in March 2020. "It's a dynamic situation, and things are

changing fast," said Ali Mokdad, a professor and chief strategy officer of population health at the institute.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/18/health/covid-at-home-testing-data/index.html>

COVID-19: Face masks no longer needed on public transport in the US after judge voids national mandate

People are no longer required to wear a mask on public transport in the US after a federal judge voided a national mandate, in a decision that has been described as "disappointing" by the White House. The judge, in Tampa, Florida, ruled that the national mask mandate, which covered airlines, airports, mass transit and taxis, was unlawful. District Judge Kathryn Kimball Mizelle said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) failed to justify its decision to extend the rule until 3 May and did not follow proper law making.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-face-masks-no-longer-needed-on-public-transport-in-the-us-after-judge-voids-national-mandate-12593471>

Cairo's Ramadan street feasts return after coronavirus suspension

Communal meals in which hundreds of people pack around long tables to break their fast during the holy month of Ramadan have returned to Egypt's streets after being widely suspended for the past two years due to COVID-19 restrictions. Egypt has been hit by successive waves of COVID-19 infections and imposed a nighttime curfew that coincided with Ramadan in 2020. Most restrictions have now been lifted.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/cairos-ramadan-street-feasts-return-after-coronavirus-suspension-2022-04-19/>

Second Global COVID-19 Summit scheduled for May 12

A second Global COVID-19 Summit will be held virtually next month for countries to discuss efforts to end the pandemic and prepare for future health threats, according to a joint statement on Monday. "The emergence and spread of new variants, like Omicron, have reinforced the need for a strategy aimed at controlling COVID-19 worldwide," the White House said in a news release with the Group of Seven and Group of 20 nations.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/second-global-covid-19-summit-scheduled-may-12-2022-04-18/>

Uber scraps mask requirement for riders, drivers as COVID cases fall

Uber has scrapped mandatory face masks for its riders and drivers in the United States, the ride-hailing company said on Tuesday, adding that riders have the option to cancel their trip if they feel uncomfortable with its move. The company introduced mask mandates for its drivers, riders and delivery workers around the world in May 2020 as COVID-19 cases rose.

<https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/uber-scraps-mask-requirement-riders-drivers-covid-cases-fall-2022-04-19/>

Cheers and fears as US ends mask mandates for travel

A federal judge's decision to strike down a national mask mandate was met with cheers on some airplanes but also concern about whether it's really time to end one of the most visible vestiges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The major airlines and many of the busiest airports rushed to drop their requirements on Monday after the Transportation Security Administration announced it wouldn't enforce a January 2021 security directive that applied to airplanes, airports, taxis and other mass transit. But the ruling still gave those entities the option to keep their mask rules in place, resulting in directives that could vary from city to city.

<https://apnews.com/article/judge-strikes-down-mask-mandates-1fcaa750b6d42b6b609ef75d3c14c26>

Uber, Lyft end mask mandates for riders, drivers as COVID cases fall

Uber Technologies and Lyft Inc have scrapped face mask mandates for their riders and drivers in the

United States, the ride-hailing companies said on Tuesday, as COVID cases have fallen sharply from their January peak. Walt Disney Co also said that wearing masks would be optional for fully vaccinated visitors at its indoor and outdoor locations and transport facilities. It recommended guests who are not fully vaccinated to continue wearing face coverings at all indoor locations and enclosed transportation. Lyft, which also ended requirements for vehicle windows to be kept open and for the front seat to empty, said health safety reasons will no longer appear under cancellation options on its app.

<https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/uber-scraps-mask-requirement-riders-drivers-covid-cases-fall-2022-04-19/>

Exit Strategies

J&J pulls COVID vaccine sales forecast due to low demand, supply glut

Johnson & Johnson on Tuesday rescinded its forecast for sales of its COVID-19 vaccine, as hesitancy in low income countries has led to a glut of supply of a shot once hoped to be the inoculation of choice for the developing world. The company had previously predicted as much as \$3.5 billion in 2022 sales from the single-dose vaccine, but demand has withered. Still, the company reported strong results for its medical devices business and raised its dividend, driving shares up around 3%.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/johnson-johnson-suspends-sales-forecast-covid-19-vaccine-2022-04-19/>

NSW to end COVID-19 household isolation rules

NSW and Victoria will end isolation requirements for household contacts of COVID-positive people by this weekend as both states pass the peak of the latest Omicron wave. The removal of one of the last major remaining pandemic restrictions means people who live with positive coronavirus cases will no longer need to isolate at home for seven days.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/nsw-set-to-end-covid-19-household-isolation-rules-20220419-p5aeli.html>

Italy averted 150000 COVID-19 deaths due to vaccinations

Infections, hospitalisations and deaths associated with COVID-19 could have been much higher without the help of vaccinations in Italy, a recent report published by the National Institute of Health (ISS) has found. The COVID-19 vaccination campaign has avoided about eight million cases, over 500,000 hospitalisations, 55,000 intensive care stays and about 150,000 deaths in Italy, according to the data. The estimate refers to the period between 27 December 2020, when the campaign started, and 31 January 2022. As of 18 April, Italy registered 162,000 COVID-19-related deaths.

https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/italy-averted-150000-covid-19-deaths-due-to-vaccinations/

South Korea lifts most COVID precautions as new cases dip to two-month low

South Korea lifted almost all of its COVID-19 precautions on Monday in a major step towards a return to normal life as the Omicron variant recedes and daily infections retreated to a more than two-month low of fewer than 50,000. A midnight curfew on restaurants and other businesses was scrapped, along with a cap of 10 people allowed to gather. From next week, people will be allowed to eat snacks in cinemas and other indoor public facilities such as stadiums. People are still required to wear masks, however, with the government planning to review whether to lift a rule for masks outdoors in two weeks

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/south-korea-lifts-most-covid-precautions-new-cases-dip-two-month-low-2022-04-18/>

Taiwan says COVID vaccine talks held up on China sales deal

Talks on Taiwan buying the child version of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine have stalled as Pfizer does not have the right to sell it and BioNTech and its Chinese partner do not make it, a Taiwanese minister said on Monday. The sales rights for the vaccine in Greater China, including Taiwan, belong to BioNTech and its Chinese sales agent, Shanghai Fosun. A deal for the main version of the vaccine ran aground last year after Taiwan accused China of political interference,

which Beijing denied.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/taiwan-says-covid-vaccine-talks-held-up-china-sales-deal-2022-04-18/>

Hong Kong zero-COVID policies create mountains of plastic waste

Hong Kong arrivals meet plastic everywhere in quarantine hotels: Remote controls are wrapped in cellophane, pillows are encased in plastic bags, food comes with plastic cutlery. Hong Kong's strict quarantine policies - intended to halt COVID-19 at the border and in the community - have been criticised for damaging the economy and mental health. Environmentalists say the policies are also hurting the environment by generating excess waste.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/hong-kong-zero-covid-policies-create-mountains-plastic-waste-2022-04-19/>

Poland declines to take or pay for more COVID-19 vaccines for now

Poland will not take or pay for more doses of COVID-19 vaccine under the European Union's supply contract, its health minister said on Tuesday, setting the stage for a legal battle with manufacturers. Poland, along with other EU members, has been receiving COVID-19 vaccines during the coronavirus pandemic under supply contracts agreed between the European Commission and vaccine makers such as BioNTech and Pfizer or Moderna. However, the country has seen lower vaccine uptake than most of the European Union and has surplus vaccine stock, part of which it has sold or donated to other countries.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/poland-says-it-wont-take-or-pay-more-covid-19-vaccines-now-2022-04-19/>

Analysis: Demand for Pfizer's COVID pills lags around the world

Worldwide demand for Pfizer's oral COVID-19 antiviral treatment Paxlovid has been unexpectedly light due to complicated eligibility requirements, reduced testing, and potential for drug interactions, a Reuters review of data and interviews with experts has found. Demand also has been hampered by the perception that Omicron infections are not that severe. Paxlovid was expected to be a major tool in the fight against COVID after it reduced hospitalizations or deaths in high-risk patients by around 90% in a clinical trial.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/demand-pfizers-covid-pills-lags-around-world-2022-04-19/>

Shanghai prepares to ease Covid lockdown as factories reopen

Shanghai is preparing to ease its lockdown over the city's 25 million people with authorities hoping Covid transmissions will mostly be limited to quarantine facilities. Factories are returning to production in closed-loop systems, with Tesla staff reportedly told to sleep on site. Amid China's worst outbreak since Wuhan at the start of the pandemic, Shanghai continues to report tens of thousands of cases a day, with the majority among people in quarantine or isolation. On Monday, Reuters reported officials had set a target of reaching "zero-Covid at the community level" by Wednesday.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/19/shanghai-prepares-to-ease-covid-lockdown-as-factories-reopen>

Analysis: China's Xi sticks with COVID stance despite anger, economic headwinds

For many leaders, mounting public anger and a rapidly worsening economic outlook would be cause for worry and a policy rethink. But Chinese President Xi Jinping, who doubtless would prefer smoother sailing in the run-up to a third leadership term, is doubling down on a signature "dynamic zero" COVID-19 policy that has been increasingly tested by the more infectious Omicron variant. Xi's high-profile reiteration of the policy, made last week during a visit to the southern island of Hainan that capped days of state-media support for it, reflects a political imperative not to reverse course and look weak in a year in which he needs to appear strong, analysts said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-xi-sticks-with-covid-stance-despite-anger-economic-headwinds-2022-04-19/>

Biden Administration Weighs Next Steps After Judge Throws Out Transportation Mask Mandate

A federal judge's decision to strike down the Biden administration's Covid-19 mask mandate for public transportation undercuts a key safety message delivered by the White House, leaving the administration with a set of legally and politically difficult decisions to make on the pandemic. The Justice Department said Tuesday it would appeal the ruling by U.S. District Judge Kathryn Kimball Mizelle if the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention concludes in the coming weeks that a mask mandate remains necessary to protect public health. "The department continues to believe that the order requiring masking in the transportation corridor is a valid exercise of the authority Congress has given CDC to protect the public health," a Justice Department spokesman said in a statement. "That is an important authority the department will continue to work to preserve."

https://www.wsj.com/articles/biden-administration-weighs-next-steps-after-judge-throws-out-transportation-mask-mandate-11650394275?mod=business_minor_pos4

Canada to keep mask mandate after judge strikes down U.S. rule

Canada's government said on Tuesday it has no plans to stop requiring masks on planes after a Florida judge struck down a U.S. version of the law. "We are taking a layered approach to keeping travelers safe, and masks remain an incredibly useful tool in our arsenal against COVID-19," a spokesperson for Canada's Transport Minister wrote in an email. The spokesperson confirmed masks will be required on Canadian airlines and on flights that depart from or arrive in Canada. The federal government also requires travelers to wear masks and track close contacts for 14 days after arriving in Canada.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/canada-keep-mask-mandate-after-judge-strikes-down-us-rule-2022-04-19/>

Partisan Exits

Heads accuse Government of 'ignoring Covid' by ending publication of school coronavirus data

Headteachers have criticised the Government for its "deeply troubling and ill-advised" decision to stop publishing data on the number of school absences in England linked to Covid-19. The National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) said the move appeared to be part of an "ignoring Covid plan" for schools. The Department for Education (DfE) published its fortnightly absence statistics for state schools in England today. Figures for 7 April showed that in schools that had not broken up for Easter, attendance stood at 89.1 per cent, compared to 88.6 per cent on 31 March.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/education/headteachers-government-ignoring-covid-ending-publication-school-coronavirus-statistics-1582792>

UK's Johnson respects outcome of lockdown breach investigation - spokesman

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson respects the outcome of the police investigation that resulted in him being fined for breaking coronavirus lockdown rules, his spokesman said on Tuesday. "He's talked about understanding the strength of feeling about this issue, which is why he has apologised and fully respects the outcome of the police investigation," the spokesman said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uks-johnson-respects-outcome-lockdown-breach-investigation-spokesman-2022-04-19/>

Boris Johnson to apologise to UK parliament over lockdown fine

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson apologised to parliament on Tuesday after he was fined by police for breaking lockdown rules, saying he did not know a birthday gathering at the height of the pandemic was in breach of the rules he had set. Opposition lawmakers argue that the prime minister must go, saying he set stringent rules during COVID-19, broke those rules in Downing Street and

then repeatedly lied to parliament when he said all guidelines had been met. Johnson told the House of Commons he had not deliberately mislead parliament but said it had never occurred to him that he was in breach of the rules. He acknowledged that the public had a right to expect better.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-johnson-apologise-parliament-over-lockdown-fine-2022-04-19/>

Continued Lockdown

Fear, paranoia, anger - this is life under China's zero-Covid strategy

When cases grew in Shanghai, I was hopeful. I thought there would be no way Shanghai would be like Jilin and Changshun, smaller cities that had recently locked down millions of people to contain Covid outbreaks. I assumed that the government would finally have to relax its kneejerk "zero Covid" approach. I could not have been more wrong. Restrictions throughout China have become more draconian. We call this the Shanghai effect. After 24 million people became locked down here, everything was amped up elsewhere too. I live in a smaller city near Shanghai, and life has changed significantly in the last few months, our movements increasingly restricted. Some factories in Shanghai are beginning to reopen, but it seems that other restrictions will remain until cases fall further.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/apr/19/china-zero-covid-strategy-omicron-response>

Shanghai urges cooperation with COVID tests amid rising scepticism

The Chinese city of Shanghai on Tuesday pleaded for public cooperation with a massive new push to test most of the population for COVID-19 as it tries to bring community transmission down to zero after nearly three weeks of lockdown. The plea came as some people refused to join PCR testing queues out of weariness after weeks of such requirements, or fear it puts them at greater risk of infection. Residents shared stories on social media about busloads of people being taken from their homes and sent into quarantine, including babies and the elderly.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-steps-up-quarantine-transfers-new-covid-cases-decline-2022-04-19/>

Scientific Viewpoint

Ocugen gains rights to market Covid-19 vaccine in Mexico

Ocugen and Bharat Biotech have signed an amendment to their co-development, supply and commercialisation agreement for expanding the former's exclusive territory to include marketing of their Covid-19 vaccine, Covaxin (BBV152), in Mexico. With the latest development, Ocugen will have complete commercialisation rights to Covaxin in North America. The expansion of licence between the companies for supply in Mexico has the same profit share structure as in the US.

<https://www.pharmaceutical-technology.com/news/ocugen-rights-vaccine-mexico/>

Japan's MHLW grants approval for Takeda's Covid-19 vaccine

The Japan Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) has granted manufacturing and marketing approval to Takeda's Covid-19 vaccine, Nuvaxovid Intramuscular Injection, for initial and booster vaccination in people of the age 18 years and above. The recombinant protein-based Covid-19 vaccine contains Matrix-M adjuvant. It can be stored at a refrigerated temperature of 2°C to 8°C and requires a standard vaccine supply chain for transportation. In August 2020, Takeda and Novavax entered a collaboration to develop, manufacture and supply the latter's Covid-19 vaccine candidate in Japan.

<https://www.pharmaceutical-technology.com/news/japan-mhlw-takeda-vaccine/>

Cambridge start-up searches for next Covid jab in animal faeces

DIOSynVax, a UK start-up founded by a vet-turned-vaccinologist, is hoping genetic sequences of viruses discovered in animal faeces will give vital clues for creating a vaccine to help prevent future pandemics. The Cambridge university spinout is working on two vaccines that it believes will outlive the current crop of Covid-19 jabs, including the one created by researchers at rival Oxford

university. Jonathan Heeney, who first became interested in coronaviruses when he diagnosed them in cats and cheetahs during his studies, said scientists were learning about future threats from the guano-covered floors of bat caves and waste from other animals including civet cats and pangolins.

<https://www.ft.com/content/1b5323b9-3e1b-4df1-afa5-1d322f7bc019>

The Israeli COVID vaccine has taken its last breath

The demise of BriLife, the Israeli COVID-19 vaccine project, whose development was announced by former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about two years ago, didn't surprise anyone. In spite of that, its ending was clandestine and modest. Nobody bothered to "attend the funeral" or to express condolences, and what began with great fanfare at the Israel Institute for Biological Research in Nes Tziona - on the way to an Israeli "vaccine project" that would cancel dependence on the international pharmaceuticals companies - is ending with a whisper. The news of the product's cancellation came from the American NRx Pharmaceuticals company, which signed a cooperation agreement with the Biological Institute, rubber-stamped by the Defense Ministry, less than a year ago. NRx is traded on Wall Street, and therefore was obligated to inform the stock exchange.

<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-the-israeli-covid-vaccine-has-taken-its-last-breath-1.10750842>

Immunologist warns of new COVID-19 strain spread in Ireland

An Irish immunologist has warned that a new, more infectious variant of COVID-19 is likely spreading in Ireland. A number of cases of the new variant, Omicron XE, have been confirmed across the UK, including Northern Ireland. Kingston Mills, an immunology professor at Trinity College Dublin, has warned that the strain is likely already circulating in the Republic of Ireland, which he said was behind the UK in terms of sequencing.

https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/immunologist-warns-of-new-covid-19-strain-spread-in-ireland/

Getting covid-19 over 50 increases the risk of getting shingles

People 50 and older who have had a mild case of covid-19 are 15 percent more likely to develop shingles (herpes zoster) within six months than are those who have not been infected by the coronavirus, according to research published in the journal *Open Forum Infectious Diseases*. The risk, however, was found to be even greater for older people who were hospitalized because of a more severe covid case, making them 21 percent more likely to develop shingles than those who did not have covid. The findings stem from data on roughly 2 million people — nearly 400,000 diagnosed with covid-19 and 1.6 million who had no coronavirus infection. Shingles is an outbreak of a painful rash or blisters on the skin, most often occurring on one side of the torso.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/04/19/shingles-and-covid-over-50/>

Over two years into COVID-19 and the World is still facing an ongoing struggle

The world has crossed over two years into COVID-19, and we are still facing many of the same challenges we originally had, but with some better tools in our arsenal. Development of new drugs will still need to move forward, and countries will need to monitor disease prevalence to know if further lockdowns or mask mandates will need to be imposed. There are now 22 marketed vaccines for COVID-19, developed in record time, including Pfizer/BioNTech's Comirnaty with over \$247 billion in sales and Moderna's mRNA-1273 with over \$200 billion in sales.

<https://www.pharmaceutical-technology.com/comment/two-years-covid-19-struggle/>

Covid-19: India accused of trying to delay WHO revision of death toll

India has been accused of attempting to delay an effort by the World Health Organization to revise the global death toll from Covid-19 after its calculations suggested that the country had undercounted its dead by an estimated 3.5 million. India's official number of deaths from Covid is 520,000. But according to in-depth analysis and investigations into the data by WHO, the total is more than 4 million, which would be by far the highest country death toll in the world. The figure tallies with previous estimates made by scientists, data analysts and medical journals that the true

number of deaths from Covid in India was up to 10 times higher than that recorded in official statistics.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/18/covid-19-india-accused-of-attempting-to-delay-who-revision-of-death-toll>

Moderna says dual variant booster with Beta more effective vs Omicron than current shot

Moderna Inc on Tuesday said a COVID-19 booster designed to target the Beta variant as well as the original coronavirus generated a better immune response against a number of virus variants including Omicron. Moderna said the results were a good sign for the company's plans for future shots targeting two COVID-19 variants. Dr. Jacqueline Miller, a top Moderna scientist, said the company had no immediate plans to file for authorization of the bivalent vaccine including the Beta variant. It will submit the data to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in order to lay the groundwork for a future bivalent vaccine candidate that includes the Omicron variant as a target.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/moderna-says-dual-variant-booster-with-beta-more-effective-vs-omicron-than-2022-04-19/>

Japan health ministry panel approves Novavax's COVID-19 vaccine

A Japanese Health Ministry committee said on Monday it has approved Novavax Inc's COVID-19 vaccine, setting the stage for full approval of the country's fourth shot for the coronavirus. The Japanese government has agreed to purchase 150 million doses of Novavax's recombinant protein type vaccine, which is to be manufactured domestically by Takeda Pharmaceutical Co.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japan-health-ministry-panel-approves-novavaxs-covid-19-vaccine-kyodo-2022-04-18/>

J&J suspends sales forecast for COVID vaccine, cuts profit view

Johnson & Johnson on Tuesday rescinded its forecast for sales of its COVID-19 vaccine, as hesitancy in low income countries has led to a glut of supply of a shot once hoped to be the inoculation of choice for the developing world. The company had previously predicted as much as \$3.5 billion in 2022 sales from the single-dose vaccine, but demand has withered. Use of the shot has been weak in high-income countries, hurt by reports of rare, potentially deadly blood clots, production issues, including an accidental mix-up of ingredients by a contract manufacturer, and concerns about efficacy.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/johnson-johnson-suspends-sales-forecast-covid-19-vaccine-2022-04-19/>

Moderna announces step toward updating COVID shots for fall

Moderna hopes to offer updated COVID-19 boosters in the fall that combine its original vaccine with protection against the omicron variant. On Tuesday, it reported a preliminary hint that such an approach might work. Today's COVID-19 vaccines all are based on the original version of the coronavirus. But the virus continues to mutate, with the super-contagious omicron variant — and its siblings — the latest threat. Before omicron came along, Moderna was studying a combination shot that added protection against an earlier variant named beta. Tuesday, the company said people given that beta-original vaccine combination produced more antibodies capable of fighting several variants — including omicron — than today's regular booster triggers.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-science-business-health-82d673c5cfd213e089c24e2e2eb90d20>

SK advances Gates-backed COVID-19 antiviral spray toward clinic

SK bioscience is stepping up work on a nasal spray to prevent and treat COVID-19. With the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation kicking in cash, the Korean biotech is preparing for initial process R&D for the production of the antiviral nasal spray. The spray is designed to deliver a protein to the nasal passages. Upon delivery, the protein forms a layer to stop the virus from penetrating deeper into the body. SK thinks the spray may also disrupt the ability of the virus to replicate, giving it a potential

role in the treatment of people already infected with the pathogen. SK has transferred technology for the protein candidate from the University of Washington, where David Baker and his collaborators got the project underway in 2020 by identifying miniprotein inhibitors of SARS-CoV-2. Lauren Carter, a lead scientist at the university's Institute for Protein Design, is continuing to work with SK on the project.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/sk-advances-gates-backed-covid-19-antiviral-spray-toward-clinic>

Moderna data yield hope for better Covid boosters, but highlight complexity of figuring out how to give them

New data from Moderna offer hope that booster shots against Covid-19 could become at least somewhat more effective than they already are. But the data also point to how difficult it could be to determine exactly which Covid shots to give as annual boosters. On Tuesday Moderna released data testing a booster shot that is bivalent, meaning it contains equal amounts of vaccine from two different strains of the virus. This booster, currently known by the code number mRNA-1273.211, contains equal mRNA amounts of ancestral SARS-CoV-2 and spike proteins from the Beta variant of SARS-CoV-2, which originally emerged in South Africa. It does not contain vaccine targeted specifically against the Delta or Omicron variants that caused the most recent waves of Covid-19.

<https://www.statnews.com/2022/04/19/moderna-data-yield-hope-for-better-covid-boosters-but-highlight-complexity-of-figuring-out-how-to-give-them/>

Global data reveal half may have long COVID 4 months on

Worldwide, 49% of COVID-19 survivors reported persistent symptoms 4 months after diagnosis, estimates a meta-analysis of 31 studies published late last week in The Journal of Infectious Diseases. University of Michigan researchers, who conducted a systematic review on Jul 5, 2021, also found the prevalence of long COVID at 1 month at 37%, while it was 25% at 2 months and 32% at 3 months. Fifty studies were identified in the review, and 41 were included in a quantitative synthesis, and 31 reporting overall prevalence were meta-analyzed. The 50 studies included a total of 1,680,003 COVID-19 patients, including those who were hospitalized (67,161 patients from 22 studies), nonhospitalized (4,165 from 5 studies), and any COVID-19 patients, regardless of hospitalization status (1,608,677 from 23 studies).

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/04/global-data-reveal-half-may-have-long-covid-4-months>

'The equivalent of a plane's worth of people still die every day': If you wear a mask on a train or plane, while others don't, will it protect you from COVID-19?

Does it pay to be a mask-wearing outlier? On Monday, a federal judge in Tampa, Fla. threw out the national mask mandate for public transportation across the U.S., effectively giving airports and airlines, trains, and even ride-hailing services the option to keep mask rules or abandon them, resulting in mask-mandate rules that will vary depending on the city, company and mode of transport. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently extended recommendations to wear masks to May 3. The Biden administration said the mask mandate on public transport would not be enforced as federal agencies decide how to respond to District Judge Kathryn Kimball Mizelle's order

<https://www.marketwatch.com/story/the-equivalent-of-a-planes-worth-of-people-still-die-every-day-if-you-wear-a-mask-on-a-train-or-plane-while-others-dont-will-it-protect-you-from-covid-19-11650381625>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Taiwan faces tough choices as COVID-19 cases hit record levels

Last Tuesday, Taiwan's health minister said the island could see 1,000 local COVID-19 cases a day by the end of the month. It hit that level just three days later, and must now choose between living with the virus like New Zealand or sticking with elimination strategies like in Hong Kong. Local cases hit a new record of 1,390 on Monday and have averaged 1,176 over the past five days. The surge

rattled many of the island's 23 million people, which has seen just 854 COVID-19 deaths from local infection over the entire pandemic. "The scale of the pandemic right now is very large," Health Minister Chen Shih-chung said at a briefing Friday, adding Taiwan may one day see tens of thousands — or even millions — of cases. "The point is not about the case counts, but about whether we can prevent a disastrous impact."

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/04/19/asia-pacific/taiwan-covid-cases/>

COVID-19: Shanghai confirms seven coronavirus deaths of latest outbreak as strict lockdown continues

Seven people infected with coronavirus in Shanghai have died, the first new deaths during the city's current outbreak. The deaths come after roughly 26 million people were placed under extremely strict lockdown restrictions for several weeks. All of those who died are reported to have been elderly and with underlying health conditions. People are banned from leaving their homes and are relying on the government to deliver food, with small-scale protests breaking out as some people have been unable to get enough. Police in hazmat suits were seen dispersing people protesting against the city's harsh COVID rules last week.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-shanghai-confirms-seven-coronavirus-deaths-of-latest-outbreak-as-strict-lockdown-continues-12592775>

Taiwan sees first death of young child due to COVID-19

A two-year-old boy from New Taipei on Tuesday became the first child in Taiwan to die of COVID-19 since the pandemic began, which doctors attributed to the rapid deterioration of his condition after he developed symptoms. The hospital said in a statement that although it tried hard to save the boy, who tested positive for COVID-19 on April 14 and was admitted to an intensive care unit (ICU) later the same day, he died of brain stem encephalitis, which resulted from septicemia triggered by the COVID-19 infection. The hospital said the boy was pronounced dead at 3:46 a.m. Tuesday with his parents by his side.

<https://focustaiwan.tw/society/202204190011>

COVID-19 tracker: Downward trend in Tokyo cases continues

Tokyo confirmed 5,583 new cases of COVID-19 on Tuesday, falling by about 1,300 from the week before as a downward trend continued in the capital. The seven-day average of new cases in the capital came to 6,377.1 compared with 7,589.9 from a week before, as infections have been on a downtrend in the past several days. The number of severe cases under Tokyo's standards remained the same as Monday at 15, while four new deaths linked to COVID-19 were reported Tuesday. On Monday, Japan confirmed 24,258 new cases, down by some 9,000 from a week before, while the number of very ill patients rose by three from Sunday to 222. New COVID-19 fatalities across the country totaled 27.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/04/19/national/covid-tracker-april-19/>

India's COVID infections hit month-high, one state reports spike in deaths

India's tally of daily COVID-19 cases nearly doubled on Monday from the previous day to more than 2,000 for the first time in a month, government data showed, and the southern state of Kerala reported a big jump in deaths. India was at the centre of the global COVID crisis this time last year but the situation has improved since then and most precautions including the wearing of masks have recently been dropped. But cases have been creeping up in the country of 1.35 billion people in the past few days

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/indias-covid-infections-hit-month-high-one-state-reports-spike-deaths-2022-04-18/>

Shanghai records first official Covid deaths since lockdown imposed

Three Covid-19 fatalities have been reported in Shanghai, the first to be officially counted since the

beginning of the city's lockdown. The three people reported on Monday included two women aged 89 and 91, and a 91-year-old man, who also had underlying health conditions, and were reportedly unvaccinated. Shanghai municipal authorities said the three were admitted to hospital and became critically ill. They died on Sunday "after all efforts were made to rescue them". As of 5 April, more than 92 million Chinese people over 65, including 20.2 million over the age of 80, were not fully vaccinated.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/18/shanghai-records-first-covid-deaths-since-lockdown-imposed-on-city>