

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

17th May 2021

Overnight NewsRoundUp

Coronavirus vaccines 'almost certainly less effective' at reducing Indian variant transmission, expert warns

- Professor Anthony Harnden said vaccines will help in dampening down the spread of the virus but that vigilance is still needed. [He said that coronavirus vaccines are 'almost certainly less effective' at reducing transmission of the Indian variant of the disease but are thought to reduce the risk of severe cases.](#)
- New coronavirus cases involving the Indian variant have more than doubled in a week, and Prime Minister Boris Johnson said Friday it could risk serious disruption to the planned lockdown easing on 21 June.
- Speaking on BBC's Radio 4's Today programme last Saturday, Professor Harnden said 'The vaccines may be less effective against mild disease but we don't think they're less effective against severe disease. But in combination with being less effective against mild disease, they're almost certainly less effective against transmission.'
- He also defended the approach of bringing forward second jabs rather than speeding up the rollout to younger people, saying targeting more vulnerable people with full immunity is a better strategy. He said 'the reason we think this is because, if we immunise 18-29 year olds, for instance, in these areas we'll be taking vaccines from somebody else in the country. 'The vaccines may be less effective against transmission and immunity takes a number of weeks to develop, so it is not a good strategy for preventing transmission, what we want is to prevent disease.'
- The Indian variant of COVID-19 could be as much as 50% more transmissible, according to Government advisory group Sage. It could also lead to a substantial resurgence of people needing hospital treatment, according to minutes from a Sage meeting on Thursday 13 May. Data from Public Health England (PHE) published last Thursday, showed a steep rise in cases associated with the variant, known as B1617.2, from 520 cases to 1,313.

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Coronavirus vaccines are "almost certainly less effective" at reducing transmission of the Indian variant of the disease but are thought to reduce the risk of severe cases, according to a top Government scientific adviser. New coronavirus cases involving the Indian variant have more than doubled in a week, and Prime Minister Boris Johnson said Friday it could risk "serious disruption" to the planned lockdown easing on 21 June. Deputy chair of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation Professor Anthony Harnden has said that although vaccines will help in "dampening down" the spread of the virus, vigilance is needed.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/coronavirus-vaccines-less-effective-reducing-indian-variant-transmission-expert-warns-1003029>

Critics of Tokyo Olympics submit petition urging cancellation

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Critics of Japan's plan to hold the Tokyo Olympics despite a fourth wave of coronavirus infections submitted a petition on Friday signed by 350,000 people over nine days calling for the Games to be cancelled. "Stop Tokyo Olympics" campaign organiser Kenji Utsunomiya said the global festival of sport - already postponed from 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic - should take place only when Japan can welcome visitors and athletes wholeheartedly.

<https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/olympics-petition-against-tokyo-olympics-with-350000-signatures-submitted-2021-05-14/>

My Covid scars need time to heal. Going maskless and getting back to 'normal' will take me a while

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David Malebranche is an internal medicine physician specializing in sexual health and the prevention and treatment of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. He writes: "CDC guidelines issued this week inform me that, as someone who is fully vaccinated, I can "resume activities that I did prior to the pandemic." That means I can often go maskless. The physician and scientist in me leapt for joy upon hearing these evidence-based recommendations. The human in me, however, isn't as enthusiastic. Nothing for me is "normal" anymore. While I feel somewhat safer after being vaccinated, I still cringe knowing the element of narcissistic American culture that hijacked the pandemic narrative for the past year is still out there in droves."

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/05/16/not-going-maskless-until-my-covid-scars-begin-healing/>

All over-50s to get second dose of Covid-19 vaccine early in bid to prevent deadly wave due to Indian variant

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In England, everyone over 50 or with a pre-existing health condition should now get a second dose of the coronavirus vaccine eight weeks after their first in order to boost their protection against Covid-19 in light of the growing Indian variant. The independent regulator has recommended the change in strategy in order to reduce the number of people who are vulnerable to serious illness if the spread of the new strain leads to a spike in infections. Ministers are confident the new approach can be delivered without slowing down the rollout of first doses to the under-40s, because most people waiting for a second dose have received Oxford/AstraZeneca whereas younger cohorts will be given Pfizer or Moderna instead.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/all-over-50s-to-get-second-dose-of-covid-19-vaccine-early-in-bid-to-prevent-deadly-wave-due-to-indian-variant-1002880>

Share COVID jobs instead of vaccinating kids, WHO urges

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The World Health Organization has urged rich countries to reconsider plans to vaccinate children and instead donate COVID-19 shots to the COVAX scheme that shares them with poorer nations. The WHO is hoping more countries will follow France and Sweden in donating shots to COVAX after inoculating their priority populations to help address a gulf in vaccination rates. Canada and the United States are among countries that have authorised vaccines for use in adolescents in recent weeks. However, a WHO official said talks with Washington on sharing doses were under way.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/14/who-urges-countries-to-donate-shots-instead-of-vaccinating-kids>

Amazon offers \$100 vaccine bonus to entice 75,000 US workers

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Amazon is seeking to hire 75,000 people in a tight job market and is offering bonuses to attract United States workers, including \$100 for new hires who are already vaccinated against COVID-19.

The jobs are for delivery and warehouse workers, who pack and ship online orders. Amazon, which already pays at least \$15 an hour, gave out raises for some of its workers last month, and the company said Thursday that new hires will make an average of \$17 an hour.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/5/13/amazon-offers-100-vaccine-bonus-to-entice-75000-us-workers>

Britain to hold meeting to encourage global COVID vaccine take-up

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Britain said on Saturday it plans to hold a virtual meeting on June 2 to encourage global take-up of COVID-19 vaccines, bringing together medical experts, officials from G7 countries and other partners. The event will discuss how to tackle misinformation about vaccines, including the role social media companies can play in stopping the spread of damaging falsehoods. Britain, which has one of the world's fastest inoculation campaigns and an uptake of over 90% in older age groups, hopes to use its presidency of the Group of Seven nations to improve access to coronavirus vaccines.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/britain-hold-meeting-encourage-global-covid-vaccine-take-up-2021-05-15/>

COVID-19: Big changes in the rules for people who are fully vaccinated in the US

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Vaccinated people in the US will be allowed to stop wearing their face masks in most settings. Masks are no longer being recommended for vaccinated people when they are in crowded places outdoors and in most indoor settings - and they won't have to follow social distancing measures either. The Centers For Disease Control And Prevention (CDC) changed its guidance for fully vaccinated people on Thursday. Masks will still need to be worn in crowded indoor settings such as buses, planes, hospitals, prisons, and homeless shelters.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-fully-vaccinated-people-in-the-us-no-longer-have-to-wear-face-masks-or-follow-social-distancing-rules-12305871>

Covid-19: France's vaccine rollout on track to hit 20 million target

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France reached its goal Saturday of 20 million initial doses of coronavirus vaccines, French President Emmanuel Macron announced on Twitter, days ahead of a hugely anticipated reopening of restaurant terraces as the government begins lifting a nationwide lockdown. Macron announced the milestone in a tweet that said "20 million" with a green checkmark, a number that represents around 30 percent of the population. Health officials said the exact figure was 20,086,792; with 8,805,345 people having also had a second vaccine dose.

<https://uk.news.yahoo.com/frances-covid-19-jab-rollout-123845929.html>

COVID-19: The three days in April that may have fuelled UK outbreak of Indian coronavirus variant

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If the new Indian variant does install itself as the main variant of COVID-19 in this country; if it does lead to more cases and in turn more deaths - and both of those remain big ifs - the question of how this happened is likely to focus on three days in April. And it's a question that has grown more pertinent - Prof Chris Whitty said that over time the new variant is indeed expected to become the dominant strain in the UK, while the prime minister said that it could cause "serious disruption" to the planned roadmap out of lockdown in June. The spotlight will likely fall not just on the scientists advising the prime minister, but on Boris Johnson himself.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-the-three-days-in-april-that-may-have-fuelled-uk-outbreak-of-indian-coronavirus-variant-12306393>

Thousands of Cambodians go hungry in strict lockdown zones

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Tens of thousands of Cambodians are going hungry under the country's strict lockdown as Covid cases continue to rise amid criticism from human rights groups that the government and the UN are being too slow to act. The south-east Asian country had recorded one of the world's smallest coronavirus caseloads, but infections have climbed from about 500 in late February to 20,695 this week, with 136 deaths. A three-week blanket lockdown in the capital, Phnom Penh, was lifted last week but more than 150,000 people are still living in designated red zones in cities across Cambodia, forbidden from leaving their homes other than for specific medical reasons. Many have been living under the country's most restrictive lockdown measures since mid-April and have not been able to work or get food, medicine and other necessities for weeks.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/may/13/thousands-of-cambodians-go-hungry-in-strict-lockdown-zones>

Japanese gov't to boost domestic coronavirus vaccine development as 'national strategy'

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The Japanese government is quickly crafting a new strategy to boost development of domestic coronavirus vaccines, the Mainichi Shimbun learned on May 13. The government has created a framework for the new strategy to boost coronavirus vaccine development and a production system, based on lessons learned from delays in developing domestic vaccines. Setting the development of domestic vaccines as a "national strategy to tackle on a long-term and continuous basis," the government intends to incorporate items such as forming and funding a research and development hub to boost vaccine development with new technologies, arranging a clinical trial environment and revising the pharmaceutical approval system.

<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20210514/p2a/00m/0na/012000c>

'Pan-coronavirus' vaccine shows early promise in monkeys and mice, research finds

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A universal vaccine that could offer protection against Covid variants, along with a variety of other coronavirus infections, including Sars and Mers, has been found to be effective in monkeys and mice, scientists say.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/independentpremium/covid-vaccine-pan-coronavirus-flu-latest-b1845607.html>

Nearly 12,000 lives saved by vaccines so far in England - analysis

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The rollout of COVID-19 vaccines in England has prevented nearly 12,000 deaths and more than 30,000 hospitalisations in older people, an analysis by government agency Public Health England (PHE) said on Friday. Britain has given two-thirds of its adult population at least one shot of COVID-19 vaccine, helping Prime Minister Boris Johnson in his efforts to reopen the economy by the summer.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/nearly-12000-lives-saved-by-vaccines-so-far-england-analysis-2021-05-13/>

Italian study shows COVID-19 infections, deaths plummeting after jabs

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COVID-19 infections in adults of all ages fell by 80% five weeks after a first dose of Pfizer, Moderna or AstraZeneca vaccine, according to Italian research published on Saturday. The first such study by a European Union country on the real-world impact of its immunisation campaign was carried out by Italy's National Institute of Health and the Ministry of Health on 13.7 million people vaccinated nationwide. Scientists started studying data from the day Italy's vaccination campaign began, on Dec. 27 2020, until May 3 2021. The analysis showed that the risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection,

hospitalisation, and death decreased progressively after the first two weeks following the initial vaccination.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/italian-study-shows-covid-19-infections-deaths-plummeting-after-jabs-2021-05-15/>

COVID mRNA vaccines induce immune response in pregnant, lactating women

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COVID-19 mRNA vaccines trigger an immune response in pregnant and breastfeeding women, and maternal antibodies transfer into infant cord blood and breast milk, a small descriptive study yesterday in JAMA finds. A team led by Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center researchers in Boston assessed immune response in a convenience sample of 103 pregnant, lactating, and nonpregnant women given either the Pfizer/BioNTech (54%) or the Moderna (46%) COVID-19 vaccine from December 2020 through March 2021. Seventeen percent of pregnant participants received their first vaccine dose in the first trimester, while 50% received it in their second trimester, and 33% got theirs in their final trimester.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/05/covid-mrna-vaccines-induce-immune-response-pregnant-lactating-women>

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Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine ran into a big setback in late March when U.S. officials paused the rollout to investigate rare blood clots. While that issue has been resolved with a new warning about the rare risk, the company's shot is running into another type of pause—a lack of supply. The federal government doesn't plan to ship any J&J COVID-19 vaccine doses to states next week as production holdups linger at J&J's manufacturing partner Emergent BioSolutions, CDC weekly distribution data show. Weeks ago, workers at Emergent's plant in Baltimore ruined up to 15 million doses of the J&J shot, triggering a controversy for the contract manufacturer that ended up with J&J in charge of the key plant. Meanwhile, the feds and Emergent have halted production there as the contract manufacturer works through a laundry list of issues highlighted by FDA investigators during a recent site visit.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/zero-johnson-johnson-covid-19-vaccine-doses-set-to-ship-next-week-as-production-holdup>

Mask mandates might be going away, but don't ditch yours just yet, scientists caution

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Fully vaccinated people are exhaling this weekend, ditching masks and easing up on social distancing, per the latest Covid-19 guidance put out by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The new advice marks a significant milestone in the nation's effort to stamp out the disease, and signals the beginning of a return to normalcy. But scientists say there are good reasons not to toss out your mask stash just yet. "It's important to not see this change as a signal that this means that the pandemic is over or that there is no capacity for policy reversals in the future," said William Hanage, an epidemiologist at Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/05/16/mask-mandates-might-be-going-away-but-dont-ditch-yours-just-yet/>

Top Indian virologist quits government panel after airing differences

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A top Indian virologist has resigned from a forum of scientific advisers set up by the government to detect variants of the coronavirus, he told Reuters on Sunday, weeks after questioning the

authorities' handling of the pandemic. Shahid Jameel, chair of the scientific advisory group of the forum known as INSACOG, declined to give a reason for his resignation. "I am not obliged to give a reason," he said in a text message, adding that he quit on Friday.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/top-indian-virologist-quits-government-panel-after-airing-differences-2021-05-16/>

The man behind Brazil's search for miracle COVID-19 cures

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Bolsonaro - a vaccine skeptic and promoter of discredited treatments such as hydroxychloroquine - said this new drug, Proxalutamide, would "soon be available to all Brazil." He invited a little-known Health Ministry official, Helio Angotti, to expand on its promise. Angotti, an eye doctor with no epidemiological experience, cited a domestic Proxalutamide study showing a 92% decrease in mortality risk among hospitalized COVID-19 patients. It was a dramatic claim amid a global struggle to find effective treatments. He said he aimed to "get it to the Brazilian population as soon as possible." But the study - co-authored by a consultant Angotti hired - hasn't been peer-reviewed or published, beyond a cursory results presentation the authors released in a March news conference. The drug does not have regulatory approval and isn't available for sale.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/man-behind-brazils-search-miracle-covid-19-cures-2021-05-14/>

Trinidad and Tobago declares state of emergency as COVID-19 cases surge

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Trinidad and Tobago will impose a state of emergency from midnight to contain an increase of COVID-19 cases and related deaths, Prime Minister Keith Rowley said on Saturday. Rowley also imposed a curfew from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. local time, with some exceptions to essential services including the energy sector, supermarkets, and pharmacies. The twin island state was experiencing a third wave of COVID-19, Rowley said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/trinidad-tobago-declares-state-emergency-covid-19-cases-surge-2021-05-15/>

Bodies of COVID-19 victims among those dumped in India's Ganges -govt document

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Bodies of COVID-19 victims have been found dumped in some Indian rivers, a state government said in a letter seen by Reuters, the first official acknowledgement of an alarming practice it said may stem from poverty and fear of the disease in villages. Images of corpses drifting down the Ganges river, which Hindus consider holy, have shocked a nation reeling under the world's worst surge in infections. Although media have linked the recent increase in the numbers of such bodies to the pandemic, the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, home to 240 million people, has until now not publicly revealed the cause of the deaths.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/bodies-covid-19-victims-among-those-dumped-indias-ganges-govt-document-2021-05-15/>

Taiwan tightens curbs after surge in domestic COVID-19 cases

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Taiwan raised its coronavirus alert level on Saturday in the capital, Taipei, and the surrounding city, bringing curbs for a period of two weeks that will shut many venues and restrict gatherings in the wake of 180 new domestic infections.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taiwan-tightens-curbs-after-surge-domestic-covid-19-cases-2021-05-15/>

COVID-19: Indian variant can 'spread like wildfire' among those not vaccinated, Health Secretary Matt Hancock warns

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Secretary Matt Hancock warns

There is a "high degree of confidence" that vaccines protect against the Indian variant of COVID-19 - but it can "spread like wildfire" among those who haven't had a jab, Matt Hancock has told Sky News. The health secretary urged those who are eligible for vaccination - but have not yet booked an appointment - to come forward to get their vaccine as he warned against the possible impact of the Indian COVID variant.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-indian-variant-can-spread-like-wildfire-among-those-not-vaccinated-health-secretary-matt-hancock-warns-12307777>

With ICUs nearly full, Colombia surpasses 80000 COVID-19 deaths

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Confirmed deaths from COVID-19 in Colombia passed 80,000 on Friday with intensive care units almost full in the biggest cities, where large crowds have been gathering for weeks of anti-government protests. Authorities warned this week that the demonstrations - initially called in opposition to a now-canceled tax reform but which have expanded to tackle inequality and police brutality - were set to prolong an already-devastating third wave of the epidemic.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/with-icus-nearly-full-colombia-surpasses-80000-covid-19-deaths-2021-05-14/>

Australia sticks by plan to re-open border in mid-2022

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Australia is sticking to plans to start re-opening to the rest of the world only from the middle of next year, officials said on Sunday, resisting mounting pressure to end the closure of international borders. In March 2020, Australia closed its borders to non-nationals and non-residents and has since been allowing only limited international arrivals, mainly citizens returning from abroad. "All the way through we will be guided by the medical advice," Prime Minister Scott Morrison said at a televised briefing. "We will be guided by the economic advice."

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/australia-sticks-by-plan-re-open-border-mid-2022-2021-05-16/>

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France reached its goal Saturday of 20 million initial doses of coronavirus vaccines, French President Emmanuel Macron announced on Twitter, days ahead of a hugely anticipated reopening of restaurant terraces as the government begins lifting a nationwide lockdown. Macron announced the milestone in a tweet that said "20 million" with a green checkmark, a number that represents around 30 percent of the population. Health officials said the exact figure was 20,086,792; with 8,805,345 people having also had a second vaccine dose.

<https://uk.news.yahoo.com/frances-covid-19-jab-rollout-123845929.html>

Fox News viewers are getting mixed messages about whether to take the coronavirus vaccine

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If you're a Fox News fan, your opinion of whether you should get the coronavirus vaccine may depend on when and whom you watch. On his 8 p.m. show, opinion host Tucker Carlson has consistently derided efforts to promote vaccination. "Almost 4,000 people died after getting the covid vaccines," he warned last week, implying causation where experts say there is none, and relying on self-reported and unverified data from the Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System. But elsewhere on the schedule, many other Fox commentators have talked up the benefits of vaccination — sometimes clashing with their own colleagues on air.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/media/2021/05/14/fox-vaccine-mixed-message/>

Delay in shutting Britain's borders with India was 'reckless, misguided and dangerous'

Delay in shutting Britain's borders with India was 'reckless, misguided and dangerous', say critics as Boris announces Indian Covid variant could put lockdown easing at risk

Country was only added to UK's travel 'red list' late last month, despite concerns. There are growing fears over the fast-growing variant, now present in Britain Labour Deputy Leader Angela Rayner led the criticism of the PM this evening

https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9580181/Boris-Johnson-blasted-reckless-not-shutting-Britains-borders-India-earlier.html?ito=social-twitter_dailymailUK

Greece extends coronavirus lockdown on Kalymnos island

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Greece has extended a lockdown on the island of Kalymnos for a week on Saturday as coronavirus infections there remained high, authorities said. Under the lockdown imposed on May 4, residents are allowed to leave home only for workplaces that remain open, to visit the doctor or pharmacy, to walk their pets or for shopping until 6 p.m. at the supermarket. They can leave the island only for health reasons. The restrictions will remain in place until 6 a.m. on May 24.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/greece-extends-coronavirus-lockdown-kalymnos-island-2021-05-15/>