

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

23rd Nov 2021

Lockdown Exit

Official: More than 90% of fed workers got shots by deadline

More than 90% of federal workers received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by Monday's deadline set by President Joe Biden. Biden announced in September that more than 3.5 million federal workers were required to undergo vaccination, with no option to get regularly tested instead, unless they secured an approved medical or religious exemption. A U.S. official said the vast majority of federal workers are fully vaccinated, and that a smaller number have pending or approved exceptions to the mandate. In all, more than 95% of federal workers are in compliance with the Biden mandate, the official said, either by being vaccinated or having requested an exemption. Workers who are not in compliance are set to begin a "counseling" process that could ultimately result in their termination if they don't get a shot or secure an approved exception to vaccination.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-joe-biden-health-2e0a1fd3f4669e87540f09b3cd6b137d>

Canada ends COVID-19 policy turning back asylum-seekers between border crossings

Canada is ending its pandemic-era policy of turning back asylum-seekers trying to cross into the country between ports of entry, according to a revised policy document released on Sunday. Canada turned at least 544 would-be refugees back to the United States between March 2020 and mid-October. The government did not immediately respond to questions regarding why it was ending the policy now and what if any quarantine rules would apply to asylum-seekers who are not vaccinated.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/canada-ends-covid-19-policy-turning-back-asylum-seekers-between-border-crossings-2021-11-22/>

Israel starts vaccinating young children as coronavirus cases rise

Israel began rolling out Pfizer/BioNtech COVID-19 vaccinations for 5- to 11-year-olds on Monday hoping to beat down a recent rise in coronavirus infections. A fourth wave of infections that hit Israel in June began subsiding in September. But over the past two weeks the "R", or reproduction rate of the virus, that had remained below one for two months began climbing and has now crossed that threshold, indicating the virus could again be spreading exponentially. Daily cases have also crept up over the past few days, with half the confirmed infections presently among children age 11 and younger.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-starts-vaccinating-young-children-coronavirus-rises-2021-11-22/>

U.S. issues 'Do Not Travel' COVID-19 warning for Germany, Denmark

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the State Department on Monday advised against travel to Germany and Denmark because of a rising number of COVID-19 cases in those countries. The CDC elevated its travel recommendation to "Level Four: Very High" for the two European countries, telling Americans they should avoid travel there, while the State Department issued parallel "Do Not Travel" advisories for both countries.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/us-raises-covid-19-travel-warning-germany-denmark-2021-11-22/>

Experimental chewing gum may reduce virus spread; Booster shot protection may be longer lasting

An experimental chewing gum containing a protein that "traps" coronavirus particles could limit the

amount of virus in saliva and help curb transmission when infected people are talking, breathing or coughing, researchers believe. The gum contains copies of the ACE2 protein found on cell surfaces, which the virus uses as a gateway to break into cells and infect them. In test-tube experiments using saliva and swab samples from infected individuals, virus particles attached themselves to the ACE2 "receptors" in the chewing gum. As a result, the viral load in the samples fell by more than 95%, the research team from the University of Pennsylvania reported in *Molecular Therapy*. The gum feels and tastes like conventional chewing gum, can be stored for years at normal temperatures, and chewing it does not damage the ACE2 protein molecules, the researchers said. Using gum to reduce viral loads in saliva, they suggest, would add to the benefit of vaccines and would be particularly useful in countries where vaccines are not yet available or affordable.

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/experimental-chewing-gum-may-reduce-virus-spread-booster-shot-protecti-on-may-be-2021-11-22/>

90% of U.S. federal employees have received at least one COVID-19 dose - White House

The White House confirmed Monday that more than 90% of 3.5 million federal employees covered by a presidential COVID-19 vaccine mandate have received at least one vaccine dose ahead of a Monday deadline. In total, the administration has deemed 95% of federal workers comply with its requirements in that either they have been vaccinated, are completing vaccinations or have a pending religious or medical exemption request, the White House said. Officials declined to disclose to Reuters the total number of fully vaccinated federal employees, but said the "vast majority" of the 90% have received both doses.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/90-us-federal-employees-have-received-least-one-covid-19-dose-officials-2021-11-22/>

U.S. families plan big holiday celebrations with COVID-19 shots in arms

Tanya Primiani will host 12 people around a long Thanksgiving table in her Silver Spring, Maryland home on Thursday, a boisterous scene she looks forward to welcoming after the COVID-19 pandemic limited the size of last year's gathering. Her parents are coming from Montreal, driving across the recently reopened U.S.-Canada border. Her sons, ages 7 and 10, have gotten their first round of COVID-19 vaccinations, and all the other guests are fully vaccinated against the virus.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-families-plan-big-holiday-celebrations-with-covid-19-shots-arms-2021-11-22/>

New Zealand to end tough COVID curbs, adopt new virus-fighting system

New Zealand will adopt a new system of living with the coronavirus virus from Dec. 3, which will end tough restrictions and allow businesses to operate in its biggest city, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said on Monday. New Zealand remained largely COVID-19 free until August but has been unable to beat an outbreak of the highly infectious Delta variant, forcing Ardern to abandon an elimination strategy and switch to treating the virus as endemic.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/new-zealand-end-tough-covid-curbs-adopt-new-virus-fighting-system-next-week-2021-11-22/>

EU wants to harmonize validity period of vaccination certificate

The European Commission aims to harmonize the duration of the validity of the COVID-19 vaccination certificate, including the effects of booster shots, Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides said on Monday, amid record infection numbers in some EU states. "I fully agree with the urgency, and this is why the European Commission is working with the utmost urgency to strengthen the coordination of free movement, including the length of validity and the role of boosters in the vaccination campaign," she told European lawmakers in Strasbourg.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-wants-harmonize-validity-period-vaccination-certificate-2021-11-22/>

Exit Strategies

Victoria closes in on 90 per cent vaccination target as state records 1029 new COVID-19 cases, three deaths

Victoria has recorded 1029 new coronavirus cases and three deaths, as the state closes in on its 90 per cent double-dosed vaccination target and the Andrews government looks set to scrape together enough support to pass its controversial proposed pandemic legislation. The figures bring Victoria's total number of active COVID-19 cases to 9533. The 10 local government areas with the most new cases were: Wyndham, Melton, Casey, Hume, Greater Dandenong, Whittlesea, Brimbank, Glen Eira, Moreland, and the Mornington Peninsula. There are 316 people in the state's hospitals with the virus, 98 in intensive care and 23 on a ventilator. Fifty-four people in ICU have been cleared of the virus. The people who died were aged in their 70s, 80s, and 90s. Their deaths bring the total number of lives lost in Victoria since the pandemic began to 1280.

<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/victoria-closes-in-on-90-per-cent-vaccination-target-as-state-records-1029-new-covid-19-cases-three-deaths-20211122-p59ats.html>

'Supercharge booster vaccines,' NHS boss Vin Diwakar pleads, as London cases rise

A health chief has called for the jabs race to be "supercharged" to get more people protected against Covid-19 as bookings for boosters were opened to those in their forties. Dr Vin Diwakar, medical director for the NHS in London, issued the appeal as official figures showed there have been 18,049 confirmed coronavirus cases in the capital in just four days. There were 4,536 announced yesterday and it is the first time since late July when daily totals have risen above 4,000 for four consecutive days. More than 1,489,000 Londoners have already had a booster, or third jab for some vulnerable groups, with uptake understood to be particularly high among people in their seventies and even higher among care home staff.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/covid-booster-vaccine-jab-nhs-london-vin-diwakar-case-rate-b967551.html>

Covid in Kenya: Unvaccinated to be barred from basic services

Kenyans will be barred from bars, restaurants and public transport from 21 December if they are not fully vaccinated against Covid-19, Health Minister Mutahi Kagwe says. The measures are aimed at increasing the rate of vaccinations ahead of the festive season. Less than 10% of the population is currently vaccinated - about 6.4 million people. This gives more 20 million adults in Kenya just a month to get vaccinated. The AstraZeneca vaccines is the most commonly used vaccine in Kenya and the two doses required to be fully vaccinated are supposed to be given at least six weeks apart.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-59367726>

Activists urge Biden to push for intellectual property waiver for COVID-19 vaccines

Fifteen medical and human rights groups are urging U.S. President Joe Biden to get personally engaged in a long-running fight to enact an intellectual property waiver for COVID-19 vaccines at the World Trade Organization, calling his leadership "a moral necessity." Amnesty International, Doctors without Borders, Human Rights Watch, Public Citizen and 11 other groups told Biden in a letter that an emergency waiver was urgently needed to combat the pandemic, noting that fewer than 7% of people in low-income countries had received a first COVID-19 shot and vaccines remained scarce.

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/asia/activists-urge-biden-push-intellectual-property-waiver-covid-19-vaccines-2021-11-22/>

Putin has been revaccinated against COVID-19, Russian agencies say

Russian President Vladimir Putin has been revaccinated against COVID-19, Russian news agencies quoted him as saying on Sunday. Putin said in June 2021 that he had been vaccinated with Sputnik V vaccine. "Today, on your recommendation and that of your colleagues, I got another vaccination, Sputnik Light. This is called revaccination," Putin said at a meeting with the deputy director of the Gamaleya Research Centre for Epidemiology and Microbiology, which developed both vaccines.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-has-been-revaccinated-against-covid-19-russian-agencies-say-2021-11-22/>

Kenya COVID-19 vaccine mandate draws praise and criticism

A Kenyan government directive that residents must show proof of COVID-19 vaccination by Dec. 21 to access services was welcomed by some businesses on Monday but criticized by others, who said low vaccination rates made it unrealistic. Only 8.8% of people are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 in Kenya so far. Health Minister Mutahi Kagwe made the announcement on Sunday. Public services affected include schools, transport services, immigration and other state offices, and hotels, bars, restaurants, national parks and wildlife reserves. The government will start a 10-day mass vaccination campaign on Friday, Kagwe said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/kenya-state-directive-will-boost-low-covid-vaccine-takeup-business-group-2021-11-22/>

Hungarians line up for shots as COVID surges across Europe

People were lining up for COVID-19 shots outside Budapest's main hospitals on Monday as Hungary for the first time offered vaccinations without prior registration amid a surge in new infections. Europe has again become the epicentre of the pandemic, accounting for half of global cases and deaths, and protests turned violent in the Netherlands and Belgium over the weekend over new curbs on movement. Austria entered its fourth national lockdown on Monday after tens of thousands marched against new restrictions. Germany is debating making COVID-19 vaccinations compulsory.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/hungarians-line-up-shots-covid-surges-across-europe-2021-11-22/>

Partisan Exits

Kansas plan on COVID mandates faces bipartisan skepticism

Conservative Kansas legislators are trying to tamp down fears about the cost and other potential problems with their proposal to provide unemployment benefits to workers who lose their jobs for refusing COVID-19 vaccines.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-joe-biden-business-health-religion-eadf501664c90e87c9949d6a3ad-ecc0f>

Angry COVID-19 protesters hurl abuse at WA Premier

Flanked by police, Western Australia Premier Mark McGowan had to be led to safety after he was subjected to a barrage of personal insults while leaving a town hall meeting yesterday. COVID-19 protesters demonstrating against the vaccine surrounded the premier at an engagement in Eaton, south of Perth, hurling abuse and chants of "dog" at Mr McGowan. The premier said the protesters, who claimed they were not anti-vaxxers but pro-choice, will only strengthen his resolve. Dozens of protesters waving the Australian red ensign - a red version of the Australian flag adopted by anti-government groups - could be seen on video rushing towards a convoy of government cars. Yesterday's demonstrations are the latest in a spate of protests and threats targeting the premier, whose office has confirmed no one was harmed in yesterday's encounter. Protesters have reportedly issued death and rape threats to Mr McGowan's staff members.

<https://www.9news.com.au/national/covid-19-vaccine-protesters-hurl-abuse-at-wa-premier-mark-mcgowan/27120c29-f043-4ff5-83a9-4852901c6ce7>

NT Chief Minister Michael Gunner labels vaccinated people opposed to COVID-19 mandates as 'anti-vaxxers'

A fiery Northern Territory Chief Minister has accused opponents of vaccine mandates of being "anti-vaxxers", even if they have willingly received the COVID-19 jab themselves. Michael Gunner's comments at a press conference today are in sharp contrast to the Prime Minister, who has called on state and territory governments to allow Australians to "move forward with the freedoms that should be theirs". The NT — which is dealing with a growing coronavirus outbreak — has one of the

country's strictest vaccination mandates, which has helped lift the jurisdiction's double-dose rate to 81 per cent. Under the mandate, most workers were required to have had at least one jab by November 12, and a second dose before Christmas.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-11-22/nt-covid-vaccine-mandate-opponents-anti-vaxxers-michael-gunner/100640656>

Romania is battling its worst Covid-19 wave yet. Wide suspicion over vaccines isn't helping

"It's relentless -- relentless," sighed nurse Claudiu Ionita, standing in front of a line of gurneys in Bucharest University Hospital's morgue. On each gurney lay a body inside a black plastic bag. The morgue has a capacity for 15 bodies, but on the day CNN visited, it had received 41. The excess bodies filled the corridor outside, while wails echoed from within the morgue. A woman had been allowed inside for a final glimpse of her father. Bucharest University Hospital is the Romanian capital's largest medical facility treating Covid-19 patients and is struggling through the country's fourth wave, its worst yet. "I never thought, when I started this job, that I would live through something like this," said Ionita. "I never thought such a catastrophe could happen, that we'd end up sending whole families to their graves."

<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/11/22/europe/romania-covid-19-vaccine-skepticism-intl-cmd/index.html>

Clashes break out in Brussels in protests over coronavirus restrictions

Police and protesters clashed in the streets of Brussels on Sunday in demonstrations over government-imposed COVID-19 restrictions, with police firing water cannon and tear gas at demonstrators throwing rocks and smoke bombs, witnesses said. About 35,000 people took part in demonstrations, police said, which began peacefully before violence broke out. Protesters wearing black hoods threw stones at police as they advanced with water cannon at the main junction in front of the European Union Commission headquarters, Reuters journalists said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/around-35000-protest-against-covid-restrictions-brussels-police-say-2021-11-21/>

COVID-19 unrest has created 'explosive' situation in Guadeloupe, says Macron

French President Emmanuel Macron said violence in Guadeloupe over COVID-19 restrictions had created a "very explosive" situation, as a general strike entered a second week on Monday and many stores remained shuttered after nighttime looting. Hours before Macron's prime minister and lawmakers from the Caribbean archipelago were to hold crisis talks in Paris, there were signs of protests spreading to Martinique, another French overseas territory 190 km (120 miles) south of Guadeloupe.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/paris-must-restore-calm-guadeloupe-after-protests-mayor-2021-11-22/>

French presidential hopeful Zemmour says COVID fears are overblown

Eric Zemmour, the hard-right French political commentator and likely presidential candidate, said on Monday that fears about the new coronavirus had been overblown. Zemmour's stance contrasts with the position of governments across Europe, which are reintroducing restrictions on movement to curb a fifth wave of the pandemic, with Austria on Monday going into a full lockdown. "We need to put this epidemic back in the right proportion. We have played a lot on people's fears. We have gone too far, and we've been going too far since the beginning," Zemmour told France Info radio.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/french-possible-presidential-candidate-zemmour-covid-fears-are-overblown-2021-11-22/>

Third night of rioting erupts over Dutch COVID-19 rules

Riots broke out in cities across the Netherlands on Sunday, the third night in a row that police clashed with mobs of angry youths who set fires and threw rocks to protest COVID-19 restrictions. Unrest was reported in locations including Leeuwarden and Groningen in the north, the eastern town

of Enschede and Tilburg in the south. In Enschede, where an emergency ordinance was issued, police used batons to try to disperse a crowd, according to video on social media. In Leeuwarden, police vans were pelted with rocks and black-clad groups chanted and set off flares.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/dutch-police-detain-dozens-second-night-covid-19-rioting-2021-11-21/>

Dutch COVID riots ‘pure violence’ by ‘idiots’: PM Rutte

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte has criticised three nights of riots over anti-COVID measures, calling the unrest “pure violence” by “idiots” and vowed to prosecute those responsible. The riots in several cities around the country since Friday were “violence under the guise of protest”, the prime minister said. He added he would always defend the right to protest, but “I will never accept is that idiots use pure violence against people ... who keep this country safe,” he told Dutch media.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/22/dutch-covid-riots-pure-violence-idiots-rutte>

Scientific Viewpoint

‘Herd immunity’ more complex than reaching 70% vaccine rate, says Oregon health expert

With COVID cases declining and the vaccine rate reaching 73%, many Oregonians are wondering when they can drop their face masks. Health experts say: not until early next year, if not longer. The COVID-19 booster is now available to all adults in Oregon. The Oregon Health Authority made the announcement Saturday, a day after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced similar federal guidelines. The news comes after a weeks-long decline in COVID cases across the state. Case numbers are about half what they were at the peak of the Delta surge in September, and COVID-related hospitalizations are down to about 400 patients. By contrast, there were 1,178 COVID patients in Oregon on Sept. 1. Nonetheless, state health officials say there’s still a long road ahead.

<https://www.opb.org/article/2021/11/22/oregon-covid-booster-shots-herd-immunity-winter-outlook/>

Pfizer's Covid vaccine was 100% effective in kids in longer-term study

Pfizer and BioNTech announced Monday that their Covid-19 vaccine was 100% efficacious in preventing infections in 12- to 15-year-olds, measured from seven days to four months after administration of the second dose of the vaccine. The companies said the new data — a longer-term analysis of a Phase 3 trial conducted in 2,228 participants — will form the basis of an application to the Food and Drug Administration for an extension of their Covid-19 vaccine license to cover youths in the age group.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/11/22/pfizers-covid-19-vaccine-was-100-effective-in-in-kids-in-longer-term-study/>

EU considers booster doses of J&J's COVID-19 vaccine

The European Medicines Agency says it is evaluating whether to authorize booster doses of Johnson & Johnson's single-shot COVID-19 vaccine. In a statement Monday, the EU drug regulator said it was considering an application from J&J to recommend booster doses of the J&J vaccine for adults 18 and over, at least two months after they were first immunized. Amid an explosive surge of new coronavirus infections across Europe the EMA said it expected to make a decision on this within weeks. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration gave the green light to J&J booster doses in October, both for people who initially received the J&J vaccine and for people who got immunized with other vaccines.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/european-medicines-agency-amsterdam-europe-moderna-b1962154.html>

Covid-19: UK will avoid European Delta surge due to vaccines and growing immunity, experts say

Coronavirus vaccinations may have prevented about 300,000 deaths in the UK, a leading scientist has claimed. Professor Sir Andrew Pollard, who helped create the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, has hailed the success of the UK’s vaccination programme. He told the BBC’s Andrew Marr: “If we just

look at the UK, the predictions last year were that there would be between 300,000 and 500,000 deaths. "And actually when you look at the data on lives saved so far this year, we're actually not far off to actually think that that is the right number, that we might have been at around about 300,000 deaths by now without a vaccine." He also said immunity is building in younger age groups due to high infection levels seen since the end of summer.

https://i.inews.co.uk/content/uploads/2021/11/PRI_209794340-640x360.jpg

Revealed: Over 600 babies born premature and needing critical care to mothers hospitalised by Covid-19

More than 600 babies have been born prematurely and needing critical care to mothers hospitalised by Covid-19, The Independent can reveal — as women are warned they are up to three times more likely to have an early birth with the virus. The figures, which cover 17 months of the pandemic, prompted calls for the government to make pregnant women of all ages eligible for Covid-19 booster jabs. Concern about pregnant women avoiding the vaccine has pushed chief medical officer Chris Whitty to urge mothers-to-be to get fully jabbed, with take-up rates in this group as low as 15 per cent last month.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/babies-premature-mothers-covid-hospital-b1959359.html>

Baidu in partnership with Sanofi to use its algorithm in mRNA vaccine, therapy development

Chinese tech giant Baidu Inc said on Monday it has licensed its algorithm for messenger RNA (mRNA) sequence to Sanofi SA for use in designing vaccine and therapeutic products, entering its first such commercial deal with a major global drugmaker. Sanofi had been one of the world's biggest vaccine makers before the pandemic, but the French firm was beaten by rivals BioNTech /Pfizer) and Moderna in developing mRNA shots against COVID-19. read more Sanofi stopped trials of its own mRNA COVID-19 shot in September, and is instead focusing on efforts with GlaxoSmithKline to bring another COVID-19 vaccine candidate to market based on the more conventional protein-based approach.

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/baidu-partnership-with-sanofi-use-its-algorithm-mrna-vaccine-therapy-development-2021-11-22/>

Germany promotes 'Rolls-Royce' Moderna shot to meet demand for COVID boosters

Germany will promote Moderna for Germans seeking booster shots as high demand for the BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine risks depleting stocks and derailing efforts to tame a fourth wave of the pandemic, Health Minister Jens Spahn said on Monday. Spahn warned during a news conference that some 16 million Moderna doses could expire in the first quarter of next year if unused, adding that some experts see Moderna as the "Rolls-Royce" of vaccines with BioNTech the "Mercedes". "Unfortunately the impression is we will insist on Moderna only to avoid the expiry of those vaccines in the first quarter of 2022," said Spahn.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germany-has-enough-mrna-shots-meet-vaccine-demand-spahn-2021-11-22/>

Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine trial data shows long-term efficacy in adolescents

Pfizer Inc said on Monday its COVID-19 vaccine provided strong long-term protection against the virus in a late-stage study conducted among adolescents aged 12 to 15 years. A two-dose series of the vaccine was 100% effective against COVID-19, measured seven days through over four months after the second dose, the company said. The long-term data will support planned submissions for full-regulatory approval of the vaccine in the age group in the United States and worldwide.

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/pfizers-covid-19-vaccine-shows-long-term-efficacy-trial-adolescents-2021-11-22/>

EU says decision on J&J COVID-19 vaccine booster dose 'within weeks'

The European Union's drug regulator said on Monday it was evaluating data on booster doses of the

COVID-19 vaccine by Johnson & Johnson (JNJ.N) following an application, and a decision could come "within weeks" under a speedy review. The approval sought is for use of a booster dose of the single-shot vaccine, COVID-19 Vaccine Janssen, to be given at least two months after the first dose to people aged 18 years and older, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) said.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/eu-says-decision-jj-covid-19-vaccine-booster-dose-within-weeks-2021-11-22/>

How COVID shots for kids help prevent dangerous new variants

Cadell Walker rushed to get her 9-year-old daughter Solome vaccinated against COVID-19 — not just to protect her but to help stop the coronavirus from spreading and spawning even more dangerous variants. "Love thy neighbor is something that we really do believe, and we want to be good community members and want to model that thinking for our daughter," said the 40-year-old Louisville mom, who recently took Solome to a local middle school for her shot. "The only way to really beat COVID is for all of us collectively to work together for the greater good." Scientists agree. Each infection — whether in an adult in Yemen or a kid in Kentucky — gives the virus another opportunity to mutate. Protecting a new, large chunk of the population anywhere in the world limits those opportunities.

<https://apnews.com/article/how0covid-shots-for-kids-prevent-variants-0dd394ddd053e0efb3f3137dba2ad470>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Germans will be 'vaccinated, cured or dead' by spring, warns health minister

Germans will be "vaccinated, cured or dead" by the end of this winter, Health Minister Jens Spahn said Monday, as he rushed out extra doses of the coronavirus jab from BioNTech and Pfizer to inject into the arms of the one-third of people in the country who are still not vaccinated. Germany is experiencing record COVID-19 caseloads in the current fourth wave of the pandemic, putting hospital intensive care units under increasing strain — with unvaccinated patients far more likely to become critically ill. "Probably by the end of this winter pretty much everyone in Germany — as has sometimes been cynically put — will be vaccinated, cured or dead," Spahn told a hastily arranged press conference, in his starkest warning to date of the risks of holding out against vaccination. "But this really is the case: With the very contagious Delta variant, it is very, very likely ... that anyone who is not vaccinated will over the next few months become infected and lack protection.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/jens-spahn-germany-biontech-pfizer-covid-19-vaccination/>

Bodies pile up outside hospital morgue as Romania struggles with fourth wave of Covid

"It's relentless -- relentless," sighed nurse Claudiu Ionita, standing in front of a line of gurneys in Bucharest University Hospital's morgue. On each gurney lay a body inside a black plastic bag. The morgue has a capacity for 15 bodies, but on the day CNN visited, it had received 41. The excess bodies filled the corridor outside, while wails echoed from within the morgue. A woman had been allowed inside for a final glimpse of her father. Bucharest University Hospital is the Romanian capital's largest medical facility treating Covid-19 patients and is struggling through the country's fourth wave, its worst yet. "I never thought, when I started this job, that I would live through something like this," said Ionita. "I never thought such a catastrophe could happen, that we'd end up sending whole families to their graves."

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/22/europe/romania-covid-19-vaccine-skepticism-intl-cmd/index.html>

Covid-19 cases on the rise in the US ahead of Thanksgiving

Cases of Covid-19 are rising across the United States as the holiday season approaches, with many people planning a return to traditional Thanksgiving gatherings. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the seven-day rolling average number of daily new cases has risen to 88,482. That is a 16.1 per cent increase from the average of 76,223 reported last week. The total number of US Covid cases since the start of the pandemic is now more than 47.3 million.

Some 196 million in the US are now vaccinated. The latest figures are a marked improvement on November 2020 when more than 160,000 cases were reported every day. A further 34.5 million Americans have received a booster shot.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/covid-cases-thanksgiving-vaccines-advice-b1961813.html>

Singapore health minister says return to strict COVID-19 curbs a last resort

A return to stricter COVID-19 curbs in Singapore will be a "last resort", Health Minister Ong Ye Kung said on Monday, as the city-state partially eased limits on social gatherings and dining out under its calibrated reopening approach. Ong also said the international travel and tourism hub would continue to open "travel lanes" with more countries for vaccinated visitors. Singapore is gradually granting small groups of vaccinated people increased liberties, resuming in-person business events and permitting quarantine-free travel from select countries as it ramps up its vaccine booster programme. "I feel it's important to do it this way, because it minimizes the chance of us having to backpedal too frequently," Ong told Reuters in an interview on Monday for the upcoming Reuters Next conference.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/singapore-health-minister-says-return-strict-covid-19-curbs-last-resort-2021-11-22/>

UK reports 40004 new COVID-19 cases, 61 deaths - daily data

The United Kingdom reported 40,004 confirmed new cases of COVID-19 on Sunday, taking the seven-day total to 287,205, a 9.4% rise over the previous seven-day period, official daily data showed. The data also showed 61 new deaths from the virus, as measured in deaths within 28 days of a positive test, were reported on Sunday, raising the seven-day toll to 1,029, a 5.9% drop compared with the previous seven days.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/uk-reports-40004-new-covid-19-cases-61-deaths-daily-data-2021-11-21/>

New Lockdown

Austria re-enters COVID-19 lockdown as cases soar again in Europe

The German health minister has warned citizens that they would be either "vaccinated, cured or dead" from COVID-19 by the end of winter as several European countries impose restrictions amid surging infections. "Probably by the end of this winter, as is sometimes cynically said, pretty much everyone in Germany will be vaccinated, cured or dead," Jens Spahn said, as he urged more Germans to get the jab. As intensive care beds fill up fast, Germany's worst-hit regions have ordered new shutdowns, including the closure of Christmas markets. In regions with high hospitalisation rates, the unvaccinated will be barred from public spaces like cinemas, gyms and indoor dining. Outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel warned that Germany's current COVID restrictions, including barring the unvaccinated from certain public spaces "are not enough".

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/22/austria-re-enters-covid-19-lockdown-as-cases-soar-anew-in-europe>

Austria locks down, Merkel says new steps needed, as Europe faces COVID freeze

Austria became on Monday the first country in western Europe to reimpose lockdown since vaccines were rolled out, shutting non-essential shops, bars and cafes as surging caseloads raised the spectre of a second straight winter in deep freeze for the continent. Germany will also need tighter restrictions to control a record-setting wave of infections, outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel was quoted as saying, remarks that erased gains on European stock markets and sent bond yields down. With Europe once again the epicentre of the global pandemic that first prompted lockdowns in March 2020, new restrictions and vaccine mandates are expected to spread nearly two years after the first COVID-19 case was identified in China.

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/stocks/austria-enters-fourth-lockdown-covid-cases-soar-anew-europe-2021-11-22/>