

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

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Lockdown Exit

Covid-Infected HIV Patient Developed 21 Mutations, Study Shows

A South African woman suffering from inadequately treated HIV, and who harbored Covid-19 for nine months saw the respiratory virus develop at least 21 mutations while in her body, according to a study. Once the 22-year-old adhered to the anti-retroviral medication used to treat HIV and her immune system strengthened she was able overcome the Covid-19 infection within six to nine weeks, the study, led by scientists from Stellenbosch and the University the University of KwaZulu-Natal showed. The research has not been peer reviewed.

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

Britain to offer COVID vaccinations to vulnerable children aged 5-11

Britain will this week begin offering vaccinations to children aged between five and 11 who are most at risk from coronavirus, the state-run National Health Service said on Sunday. Britain has been slower than some other countries in offering the shots to 5-11 year olds, and is not planning to vaccinate the age group more broadly unlike countries such as the United States and Israel. NHS England said children in the cohort who were in a clinical risk group or who live with someone who is immunosuppressed would be able to get a first COVID-19 shot, in line with advice issued last month by the Joint Committee on Vaccine and Immunisation (JCVI).

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/britain-offer-covid-vaccinations-vulnerable-children-aged-5-11-2022-01-30/>

Explainer: Scientists on alert over rising cases caused by Omicron cousin BA.2

The highly transmissible Omicron variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus - the most common form of which is known as BA.1 - now accounts for nearly all of the coronavirus infections globally, although dramatic surges in COVID cases have already peaked in some countries. Scientists are now tracking a rise in cases caused by a close cousin known as BA.2, which is starting to outcompete BA.1 in parts of Europe and Asia. The following is what we know so far about the new subvariant:

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/scientists-alert-over-rising-cases-caused-by-omicron-cousin-ba2-2022-01-30/>

Beijing reports highest number of Covid cases in 18 MONTHS just five days before Winter Olympics

Covid cases in China have spiked to their highest point in 18 months, Beijing said There were 54 cases across the whole country, with 13 in athletes and officials The Winter Olympics are set to begin in just five days in China's capital of Beijing

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10457551/Beijing-reports-highest-number-Covid-cases-18-MONTHS-just-five-days-Winter-Olympics.html>

Long Covid study finds abnormality in lungs that could explain breathlessness

Abnormalities have been identified in the lungs of long Covid patients that could offer a potential explanation for why some people experience breathlessness long after their initial infection. The findings, from a pilot study involving 36 patients, raise the possibility that Covid may cause microscopic damage to the lungs that is not detected using routine tests. Breathlessness is a symptom in the majority of long Covid patients, but it has been unclear whether this is linked to

other factors such as changes in breathing patterns, tiredness, or something more fundamental. According to Dr Emily Fraser, a consultant at Oxford university hospitals and a co-author of the study, the latest findings are the first evidence that underlying lung health could be impaired.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/jan/29/long-covid-study-finds-abnormality-in-lungs-that-could-explain-breathlessness>

China reports jump in COVID cases among Olympic athletes, officials

Daily COVID-19 infections among athletes and team officials at the Beijing Winter Olympics jumped to 19 on Friday from two a day earlier, as Games organisers warned of more cases in coming days. Including the athletes and officials, 36 Games-related personnel were found to be infected - 29 when they arrived at the Beijing airport and seven already in the "closed loop" bubble that separates event personnel from the public, the organising committee said in a statement on Saturday. "We are now just going through the peak period of people arriving in China and therefore we expect to see the highest numbers at this stage," the Games' medical chief, Brian McCloskey, told a news conference.

<https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/china-reports-36-new-covid-19-cases-among-olympics-related-personnel-2022-01-29/>

Morocco starts construction of COVID vaccine plant

Morocco has inaugurated the construction of a COVID vaccine manufacturing plant in partnership with Swedish firm Recipharm, as the country also announced it would end a flight ban that has been in place since last November. The factory, to be known as Sensyo Pharmatech, will produce vaccines against coronavirus and other diseases, with production expected to reach 116 million units in 2024, the official news agency MAP reported on Thursday.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/28/morocco-starts-construction-of-anti-covid-vaccine-plant>

Covid-19 Curbs Eased Further in Europe as New Version of Omicron Spreads in Places

Several European countries have lifted or relaxed Covid-19 restrictions, citing the milder symptoms being caused by the Omicron variant in vaccinated people—even as daily infections continued to surge in some countries and a new version of Omicron was identified as spreading in places. In the U.S., the number of recorded cases and the number of patients with Covid-19 in hospitals slipped further, while the number of recorded Covid-19 deaths rose to its highest since early last year. The daily average of Covid-19 deaths recorded over the seven days to Wednesday was 2,301, the highest figure since February. Denmark said it would lift most mandatory restrictions on Feb. 1. Premier Mette Frederiksen said Wednesday that measures ranging from mask mandates, to mandatory vaccinations for access to some public spaces and shortened opening times for some businesses would all end, with some traveling restrictions remaining in place until the end of February.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-curbs-eased-further-in-europe-as-new-version-of-omicron-spreads-in-places-11643286710>

Lifting England Covid rules while 3bn people unvaccinated reckless - experts

Boris Johnson has been accused of taking a reckless approach to public health by failing to take enough action to get jabs to 3 billion unvaccinated people in poorer countries while lifting all plan B Covid restrictions in England. The prime minister has robustly defended his record on the pandemic this week while awaiting the findings of the Sue Gray report on the "partygate" scandal, insisting he "got the big calls right" on the biggest global health crisis in a century. But now more than 300 leading scientists, health experts and academics have said his failure to take sufficient action to boost vaccination levels worldwide means it is more likely new variants will put thousands of lives at risk across the UK. "We write to you as scientists, academics, and public health experts concerned about the emergence of the Omicron variant and the threat that future variants may pose to public

health, the NHS, and the UK's vaccination programme," they said in a two-page letter delivered to 10 Downing Street.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/28/uk-covid-vaccine-stance-global-vaccination-levels-reckless-experts>

Britain to start rolling out Pfizer COVID pill next month

Britain will start rolling out Pfizer's COVID-19 pill to vulnerable people next month, the health ministry said on Friday, targeting the treatment at people with compromised immune systems for whom the vaccine can be less effective. The health ministry said that Pfizer's antiviral treatment Paxlovid, a combination of Pfizer's pill with an older antiviral ritonavir, will be made available to thousands of people from Feb. 10. "It is fantastic news that this new treatment, the latest cutting-edge drug that the NHS is rolling out through new COVID-19 medicine delivery units, will now be available to help those at highest risk of COVID-19," National Health Service medical director Stephen Powis said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/britain-start-rolling-out-pfizer-covid-pill-next-month-2022-01-28/>

Russia Suffered Deadliest Year Since World War as Covid Unbroken

Russia suffered its deadliest year since World War II as the Covid-19 pandemic shows little sign of relenting. There were 54,630 deaths associated with the virus last month, according to data released by the Federal Statistics Service late Friday. That was a 38% decrease from the record set in November but still the third-highest month since the start of the pandemic. The latest data bring total fatalities linked to Covid-19 in Russia to more than 680,000 since the virus first spread. Excluding immigration, Russia's population fell by 1.04 million last year. The country has been ravaged by Covid-19 amid widespread resistance to getting inoculated, despite the availability of free domestic vaccines.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-28/russia-suffered-deadliest-year-since-world-war-as-covid-unbroken>

Embattled CDC Rethinks Pandemic Response After Criticism of Guidelines

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is looking to reassert itself in the country's Covid-19 response amid criticism it has sown more confusion than it has offered answers. Among the first orders of business, according to the agency, is upgrading data collection that has hobbled decision making and clearing up messaging that has confused many. Yet the steps may not be enough to fix problems at the nation's premier public-health agency exposed by the pandemic. And the CDC may not have much time, as a new variant could emerge after Omicron crests. "Moving fast and risk-taking in a setting of ambiguity is not CDC's strength—it's not what they do," said Charity Dean, previously a California Department of Health official who resigned during the pandemic.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/embattled-cdc-rethinks-pandemic-response-after-criticism-of-guidelines-11643371202>

Locking down homes, Hong Kong takes COVID lesson from Beijing

Collecting sewage samples, mandatory mass-testing and sealing off residential buildings for days on end, Hong Kong is stamping out its worst COVID-19 outbreak by taking a page out of Beijing's playbook – much to the frustration of its residents. At Kwai Chung Estate, the site of a growing Omicron outbreak, authorities have placed three blocks under lockdown for five to seven days. On Thursday, the city, which has adopted a strict "zero COVID" policy to align with mainland China, reported a daily record of 164 cases.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/28/locking-people-in-their-homes-hong-kongs-covid-policy-tak>

Exit Strategies

Spotify Publishes Content Policy, Covid-19 Hub in Response to Joe Rogan Controversy

Guitarist Nils Lofgren is among the artists who said they have removed their music from the streaming service. Spotify Technology SA is publishing its content policy and creating a Covid-19

information hub in response to a growing chorus of artists and podcasters speaking out against Joe Rogan. "We know we have a critical role to play in supporting creator expression while balancing it with the safety of our users," said Chief Executive Daniel Ek in a blog post Sunday. "In that role, it is important to me that we don't take on the position of being content censor while also making sure that there are rules in place and consequences for those who violate them."

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/spotify-publishes-content-policy-covid-19-hub-in-response-to-joe-rogan-controversy-11643572945>

T-Mobile to terminate corporate employees who aren't vaccinated by April -memo

T-Mobile US Inc will fire corporate employees who are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by April 2, according to an internal company memo posted on the independent blog TMOnews.com. The blog said T-Mobile's new policy was announced on Friday in an email from its human resource chief to all staff. It follows a U.S. Supreme Court ruling on Jan. 13 that blocked President Joe Biden's COVID-19 vaccination-or-testing mandate for large businesses. "Employees who have not yet taken action to receive their first dose and upload proof by February 21 will be placed on unpaid leave," the blog quoted the memo as saying.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/t-mobile-terminate-corporate-employees-who-arent-vaccinated-by-april-memo-2022-01-29/>

Hong Kong government says commenting on its COVID strategy is not "illegal"

Having discussions and making "general remarks" about Hong Kong's coronavirus strategy is not illegal and does not violate the Chinese territory's national security law, the government said on Sunday, as it grapples to control a rise in cases. Hong Kong has followed China in sticking to a zero-COVID policy with the economic and psychological tolls rapidly rising, and measures becoming more draconian than those first implemented in 2020.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/hong-kong-govt-says-commenting-its-covid-strategy-is-not-illegal-2022-01-30/>

Biden Had Strategy to Beat Covid-19. Then Variants Arrived.

President Biden took office with a detailed plan to battle Covid-19 by accelerating vaccinations, reopening schools and selling a massive stimulus proposal to help embattled state and local officials rein in the virus. The course of the pandemic has repeatedly forced the administration to deviate from that initial script. At times, administration officials have been able to adapt quickly to changing circumstances. But in other cases, by their own admission, they failed to anticipate how the virus would evolve and how Americans would respond. Officials overestimated their ability to push vaccinations via incentives and mandates, and public-health experts say the focus on shots at times came at the expense of testing, therapeutics and other mitigation measures that could have better prepared the country for highly transmissible variants such as Delta and Omicron.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/biden-had-strategy-to-beat-covid-19-then-variants-arrived-11643452203>

Omicron, supply shortages risk pushing Germany into recession

With no easing of coronavirus restrictions in sight and manufacturing constraints only starting to ease, Europe's largest economy risks falling into its second recession of the pandemic. France and Spain meanwhile reported faster-than-expected growth.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2022/1/28/omicron-supply-shortages-risk-pushing-germany-into-recession>

Europeans eye endemic light at end of pandemic tunnel

This week, German Health Minister Karl Lauterbach told his country that it was the right time to start thinking about the COVID-19 pandemic in a different way. "When we have this [surge] behind us ... we can start opening again, step by step," he told local media. "It's correct to envisage this now." The German politician, who is a professor of epidemiology, is not the only European official making this call. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has already spoken about his plan to begin treating

the coronavirus more like the flu. Spain would “have to learn to live with it, as we do with many other viruses”, he said.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/europeans-eye-endemic-light-at-end-of-pandemic-tunnel/ar-AAteQtB>

Hong Kong Dials Back One of World’s Longest Covid-19 Quarantines

Officials shortened one of the world’s longest quarantine requirements for travelers arriving in Hong Kong to two weeks from three following pressure from international business groups over the city’s zero-Covid policies. Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam said Thursday the order, effective from Feb. 5, was made based on scientific considerations and as the Omicron variant of the coronavirus becomes the dominant strain in more countries. Other social distancing measures such as the closure of gyms, pools and evening dining, will be extended until Feb. 17, Mrs. Lam said, while a flight ban imposed in early January for arrivals from eight countries, including the U.S., U.K. and Canada will remain in place until Feb. 18. In line with China’s national strategy of seeking to maintain no infections, the city has some of the world’s strictest Covid-19 containment policies, which until recently had kept the city free of community transmissions for months.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/hong-kong-dials-back-one-of-worlds-longest-covid-19-quarantines-11643286301>

Finland Eases Some Covid Curbs as Hospitals' Case Loads Drop

Finland’s government decided to gradually ease some restrictions intended to stop overcrowding of health care after witnessing a decline in hospitalizations caused by the coronavirus. The government is opening up some cultural venues, such as theaters and cinemas, and some sporting facilities including gyms and swimming pools, Hanna Sarkkinen, minister for social affairs and health, told reporters on Thursday. It’s also expanding the opening hours of restaurants, allowing them to remain open until 9 p.m., an extra three hours to current restrictions. Bars will still have to close at 6 p.m., she said. Final decisions on the measures are taken by local authorities, she said. According to preliminary information, a peak in infections appears to have been reached, Sarkkinen said. Facilities aren’t able to use the Covid passport to circumvent restrictions, she said.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-27/finland-eases-some-covid-curbs-as-hospitals-case-loads-drop>

Omicron Pushes Some Companies Back to Virtual Shareholder Meetings

Some companies are switching to virtual shareholder meetings again as the Omicron variant continues to spread through the U.S. and businesses take precautions to limit infections. Many companies shifted to meeting with their investors remotely as Covid-19 cases first surged in the U.S. in the spring of 2020—a trend that continued in 2021, when 65%, or 3,316, of shareholder meetings by publicly traded U.S. businesses were conducted remotely, according to Wall Street Horizon, a data provider. So far, about 400 listed U.S. companies have announced a date for their 2022 shareholder meeting, and of those, 68% are planning to host an in-person event, Wall Street Horizon said. But, in recent weeks, large corporations including meat producer Tyson Foods Inc. and medical technology company Becton Dickinson & Co. have altered their plans and moved to an online-only event, which some corporate advisers say is the prudent thing to do.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/omicron-pushes-some-companies-back-to-virtual-shareholder-meetings-11643279402>

Partisan Exits

Protests at Canadian Capital Over Trucker Vaccine Rule Continue on Sunday

Raucous protests in Canada’s capital continued Sunday over trucker vaccine mandates and other Covid-19 health restrictions, but the crowd thinned from its height a day earlier after drawing military and political rebukes for poor behavior. The main avenue outside the parliament buildings in Ottawa remained blockaded by a line of big rigs, and protesters speaking on a makeshift stage said they don’t intend to leave anytime soon. Canada’s legislature has been on a winter break since mid-December, but is scheduled to resume sitting on Monday. The trucker convoy has drawn an unusual amount of global attention, most recently from Donald Trump. “We want those great Canadian

truckers to know that we are with them all the way," the former U.S. president told a Texas rally Saturday night.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-30/truckers-protesting-vaccine-rule-staying-put-in-canada-s-capital>

Argentine truckers stranded at Chilean border by slow COVID testing

Thousands of truck drivers from Argentina were stuck at the Chilean border on Saturday due to slow COVID-19 testing, as Chile faced its second transport delay crisis. Since Jan. 21, more than 3,000 trucks have been stranded at the customs checkpoint of Cristo Redentor in Mendoza, according to the Argentinean Federation of Business Entities for Cargo Transport (FADEEAC). The long wait has put both drivers and some of the trucks to the test, as trucks with refrigerator units must stay running at all times to keep the cargos at cold temperatures.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/argentine-truckers-stranded-chilean-border-by-slow-covid-testing-2022-01-29/>

Thousands of Czechs protest against COVID curbs

Thousands of Czechs massed in Prague's Wenceslas Square on Sunday, waving flags and chanting slogans against COVID-19 restrictions, even as infections surge. Protesters mainly objected to harsher restrictions for the unvaccinated, including a ban on eating in restaurants. "The state should listen to the people's demands. The arrangements and restrictions lead us on the road to hell," Zuzana Vozabova who banged a drum through the protest, said. The country of 10.7 million reported its highest daily tally of cases on Wednesday - 54,689, and the numbers on other recent days have ranked among the highest since the start of the epidemic.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/thousands-czechs-protest-against-covid-curbs-2022-01-30/>

Canada rally against vaccine mandates blocks Ottawa as Trump praises protest

Dozens of trucks and other vehicles blocked the downtown area of Ottawa for a second day after thousands descended on Canada's capital city on Saturday to protest against Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and COVID-19 vaccine mandates. Trucks remained parked on the streets near parliament on Sunday, a day before lawmakers are due to resume work after the holiday break. Hundreds of protesters were out on Sunday, too. Some truckers said they will not leave until the mandate is overturned.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/canada-protest-against-covid-vaccine-mandates-blocks-ottawa-second-day-2022-01-30/>

N.Z. Premier Ardern Enters Self-Isolation After Close Contact

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has entered self-isolation after being deemed as a close contact of a positive Covid-19 case, according to a statement from her office. The exposure occurred on Jan. 22 during a flight from Kerikeri to Auckland. "The Prime Minister is asymptomatic and is feeling well," according to the statement. She will be tested immediately on Sunday and will isolate until Tuesday. The Governor-General and members of her staff were also on board and are following the same isolation instructions.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-29/n-z-premier-ardern-enters-self-isolation-after-close-contact>

Rejected by New Zealand, reporter turns to Taliban for help

A pregnant New Zealand journalist says she turned to the Taliban for help and is now stranded in Afghanistan after her home country has prevented her from returning due to a bottleneck of people in its coronavirus quarantine system. In a column published in The New Zealand Herald on Saturday, Charlotte Bellis said it was "brutally ironic" that she'd once questioned the Taliban about their treatment of women and she was now asking the same questions of her own government. "When the Taliban offers you — a pregnant, unmarried woman — safe haven, you know your situation is messed up," Bellis wrote in her column. New Zealand's COVID-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins

told the Herald his office had asked officials to check whether they followed the proper procedures in Bellis's case, "which appeared at first sight to warrant further explanation." New Zealand has managed to keep the spread of the virus to a minimum during the pandemic

<https://apnews.com/article/afghanistan-coronavirus-pandemic-health-taliban-new-zealand-6ea607a84e0cd3342118166b1dbf47cb>

In France, anti-vax fury, politics make public service risky

In Sainte-Anastasie-sur-Issole, a village that curls catlike in verdant Provence hillocks, voters are making an early start on France's presidential election. From their ballot box this weekend and next will come the name of the candidate — picked from among dozens — that they want their mayor to endorse. Normally, the choice would be Mayor Olivier Hoffmann's alone, under a right that, at election time, turns small-potato public office-holders into hot properties — wooed by would-be candidates who need 500 endorsements from elected officials to get onto the April ballot. But in an inflamed climate of election-time politics, and with fury among opponents of COVID-19 vaccinations increasingly bubbling over into violence directed at elected representatives, Sainte-Anastasie's staunchly apolitical mayor doesn't want to be seen taking sides.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-europe-france-elections-ab2cd6fd47609c267b12372b47079c14>

'Very scary': Austria says anti-vax COVID activists cross borders

Some activists who reject COVID-19 vaccines and anti-coronavirus measures are crossing borders to join protests where extremist ideology is being spread, Austria's new domestic intelligence chief told the AFP news agency, calling the trend "very scary". Omar Haijawi-Pirchner said foreign activists are travelling to Austria — where COVID vaccines will become mandatory next month — to demonstrate and hold "network meetings with their partners, right-wing extremists".

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/28/very-scary-austria-says-anti-vax-covid-activists-cross-borders>

Joe Rogan's Podcast Puts Scientists on Edge With Climate Misinformation

The biggest podcast in the world became a venue this week for what climate scientists see as classic disinformation about the widely used forecasts that ground the response to global warming. It started Monday with Joe Rogan's interview of prominent Canadian psychologist and author Jordan Peterson for the Spotify podcast, "The Joe Rogan Experience," that's among the biggest with audiences. "There's no such thing as climate, right?" Peterson said, before addressing a familiar criticism at climate scientists: "Your models are based on a set number of variables.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-28/joe-rogan-s-podcast-puts-scientists-on-edge-with-climate-misinformation>

WHO examining allegations official abused staff, leaked vaccine data to Japan

The World Health Organisation (WHO) said it is looking into allegations a regional director in Asia bullied staff, used racist language and leaked sensitive vaccine data to Japan, accusations the official denies. WHO said in a statement to Reuters on Thursday it "is aware of the allegations and is taking all appropriate steps to follow up on the matter," following a report on the complaints by the Associated Press. In a statement provided by the WHO, Takeshi Kasai, the Manila-based director of the Western Pacific region, acknowledged being "hard on staff" but rejected charges of racism or that he shared confidential information with Japan.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/who-examining-allegations-official-abused-staff-leaked-vaccine-data-japan-2022-01-28/>

Argentine singer Verdaguer dies of COVID-19 complications

Argentine singer-songwriter Diego Verdaguer, whose romantic hits such as "Corazón de papel," "Yo te amo" and "Volveré" sold almost 50 million copies, has died of complications from COVID-19, his family said Friday. He was 70. The naturalized Mexican-Argentine musician, who was married to

singer Amanda Miguel, died Thursday afternoon in Los Angeles, his daughter Ana Victoria said in a statement released by Diam Music, Verdaguer's record company. "With absolute sadness, I regret to inform his fans and friends that today my father left his beautiful body to continue his path and creativity in another form of eternal life," said his daughter. "My mother, I and the whole family are immersed in this pain, so we appreciate your understanding in these difficult times."

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-arts-and-entertainment-mexico-caribbean-a2f1042a5608fb9e20acac546889eacf>

Scientific Viewpoint

Lung Abnormalities Found in Long Covid Patients With Breathing Issues

Researchers have discovered abnormalities in the lungs of long Covid patients who have breathlessness which cannot be detected with routine tests. The Explain study uses xenon, an odourless, colourless, tasteless and chemically non-reactive gas, to investigate possible lung damage in the patients who have not been admitted to hospital, but continue to experience the symptom. The initial results of the study suggest there is significantly impaired gas transfer from the lungs to the bloodstream in the long Covid patients despite other tests – including CT scans – coming back as normal. The study's chief investigator, Fergus Gleeson, professor of radiology at the University of Oxford and consultant radiologist at Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, said: "We knew from our post-hospital Covid study that xenon could detect abnormalities when the CT scan and other lung function tests are normal."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-29/long-covid-patients-with-breathing-issues-lung-abnormalities-now-found>

Hong Kong Study Shows Hamster-to-Human Covid Spread: Lancet

Hong Kong researchers have found evidence that pet hamsters can spread Covid-19 to people, and linked the animals to human infections in the city. The study, published Saturday in The Lancet as a preprint and not yet peer-reviewed, provided the first documented evidence of hamster-to-human transmission of the Delta variant. Researchers from the University of Hong Kong and the city's government found two independent cases of such transmission, after testing viral swabs and blood samples from animals collected from local pet shops. The hamsters in question were infected around Nov. 21, before they were imported to Hong Kong, suggesting pet animal trade may be a pathway that facilitates Covid to spread across borders, according to the study.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-29/hong-kong-study-shows-hamster-to-human-covid-spread-lancet>

COVID: New Omicron subvariant 'appears to have growth advantage'

The BA.2 subtype of the Omicron coronavirus variant appears to have a substantial growth advantage over the currently predominant BA.1 type, the United Kingdom's Health Security Agency has said. UKHSA said on Friday there was an increased growth rate of BA.2 compared with BA.1 in all regions of England where there were enough cases to compare them, and that "the apparent growth advantage is currently substantial".

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/28/omicron-subtype-has-apparent-transmission-advantage-ukhsa>

Merck's COVID-19 pill active against Omicron in lab studies

Merck & Co Inc and partner Ridgeback Biotherapeutics said on Friday six lab studies showed their experimental oral COVID-19 drug molnupiravir was active against the fast-spreading Omicron variant. The data evaluated the antiviral activity of molnupiravir and other COVID-19 antiviral agents against COVID-19 variants of concern. Molnupiravir is yet to be studied against Omicron in human studies, the companies said. Molnupiravir and a rival oral pill from Pfizer Inc were authorized in the United States in December and are considered as important tools against Omicron.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/mercks-covid-19-pill-effective-against-omicron-lab-stu>

[dies-2022-01-28/](#)

Omicron subtype has apparent transmission advantage - UKHSA

The BA.2 subtype of the Omicron coronavirus variant appears to have a substantial growth advantage over the currently predominant BA.1 type, Britain's UK Health Security Agency said on Friday. UKHSA said that there was an increased growth rate of BA.2 compared with BA.1 in all regions of England where there were enough cases to compare them, and that "the apparent growth advantage is currently substantial". "We now know that BA.2 has an increased growth rate which can be seen in all regions in England," said Dr Susan Hopkins, Chief Medical Advisor for the UKHSA.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/omicron-sub-lineage-has-apparent-transmission-advantage-ukhsa-2022-01-28/>

Easier to produce COVID vaccine shows promise in trials; nasal spray vaccine booster works in mice

The following is a summary of some recent studies on COVID-19. They include research that warrants further study to corroborate the findings and that has yet to be certified by peer review. New COVID-19 vaccine could be manufactured like flu shots. A COVID-19 vaccine that can be produced locally in low- and middle-income countries is yielding promising results in early clinical trials, researchers say. The NDV-HXP-S vaccine, developed at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City, uses an engineered version of the harmless Newcastle disease virus studded with coronavirus spike proteins to teach the immune system to recognize and attack the virus that causes COVID.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/easier-produce-covid-vaccine-shows-promise-trials-nasal-spray-vaccine-booster-2022-01-28/>

U.S. orders 100 million additional COVID-19 tests to give out

The United States government has procured more than 100 million additional COVID-19 tests from testmaker iHealth Lab Inc. as part of the White House's plan to distribute 500 million free at-home tests across the country, the Department of Defense said Friday. Starting in January, the U.S. government has been allowing households to order four free at-home COVID-19 tests from the website COVIDTests.gov with shipping expected within seven to 12 days of ordering. The batch of free tests are aimed at easing a shortage of tests across the country amid increased demand during the rapid spread of the Omicron variant.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-orders-100-mln-additional-covid-19-tests-give-out-2022-01-28/>

Covid-19 Vaccine Booster Shot Cuts Omicron Death Risk by 95%, U.K. Study Shows

Three shots of vaccine cut the risk of death from Covid-19 by 95% in those age 50 and older during the Omicron surge in the U.K., according to an early study that showed immunity from vaccination held up well against the worst effects of the disease even among older people who are most at risk. The analysis, by the U.K. Health Security Agency, offers a glimpse of how effective vaccination is against death from Omicron in a highly boosted population. The U.K. government in December hurried to offer boosters to everyone 16 and older, expanding a campaign that up to that point had only applied to people 50 and older, and those with certain health conditions. The highly mutated Omicron variant can easily evade immune defenses to infect vaccinated people, leading to record-high case numbers across the world as the variant spread, even in highly-vaccinated places like the U.K. But several studies have shown that boosting restores some protection against symptomatic illness and, to a greater degree, against hospitalization.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-vaccine-booster-shot-cuts-omicron-death-risk-by-95-u-k-study-shows-11643302875>

Antibiotic-Resistant Germs Could Be Worse Than Covid

A far more nightmarish catastrophe is already brewing in patients' bodies, hospitals and other places where deadly microbes gather, writes Therese Raphael. And it's not just one disease but a

microscopic Hydra of bugs, all evolving to become more resistant to lifesaving medicines. These ailments already kill millions each year, a toll that will only grow because the bugs keep evolving while the drugs don't, partly because making new antibiotics is bad business for Big Pharma. (As you might have heard, this industry came here to chew bubble gum and rack up ludicrous profits, and it's all out of bubble gum. A new generic-drug venture by Mark Cuban could be a model for pushing drug prices lower, writes Lisa Jarvis, but it's got a ways to go to make a dent in the industry.)

<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2022-01-27/antibiotic-resistant-germs-could-be-worse-than-covid>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Britain reports 62399 COVID cases, 85 deaths

Britain reported a further 62,399 cases of COVID-19 on Sunday and 85 more deaths within 28 days of a positive test, government statistics showed. Those figures do not include cases and deaths from Northern Ireland, which did not provide its numbers in time for inclusion in the daily update, the government said. That compared with 72,727 cases and 296 deaths reported on Saturday.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/britain-reports-62399-covid-cases-85-deaths-2022-01-30/>

Coronavirus Omicron India Live: Risk persists even though Covid cases starting to plateau in parts of India, says WHO

Kerala logged 50,812 new Covid-19 cases and eight deaths on Saturday, taking the infection count to 59,31,945 and the death toll to 53,191. There are 3,36,202 active cases in the state now. Among the districts, Ernakulam recorded the highest number of cases on Saturday (11,103), followed by Thiruvananthapuram with 6,647 and Kozhikode 4,490. The state had reported 54,537 new cases on Friday. Meanwhile, even though some cities or states in India may be beginning to see plateauing of Covid-19 cases, the risk persists and focus must be on reducing transmission and implementing situation-specific measures, senior WHO official Poonam Khetrpal Singh said. The Health Ministry had said on Thursday that early indications of Covid cases plateauing have been reported in certain geographies in the country but the trend needs to be observed.

<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/coronavirus-omicron-india-live-news-third-wave-health-ministry-covid-delhi-mumbai-7743484/>

Ukraine reports record 37,351 COVID daily cases - ministry

Ukraine registered a record daily high of 37,351 new coronavirus infections over the past 24 hours, the health ministry said on Saturday. The previous high of 34,408 cases was a day earlier. Ministry data showed 149 new related deaths, putting the total above 100,000. Ukraine's tally of infections in the pandemic stands at 4.02 million, with 100,031 deaths.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-reports-record-37351-covid-daily-cases-ministry-2022-01-29/>

Third COVID wave looms in Indonesia as omicron spreads

Indonesia is bracing for a third wave of COVID-19 infections as the highly transmissible omicron variant drives a surge in new cases, health authorities and experts said Saturday. The country reported 11,588 new confirmed infections and 17 deaths on Saturday in the last 24-hour period. It was the highest daily caseload since August when Indonesia was struggling to contain a delta-driven wave. Indonesia had recovered from last year's spike that was among the worst in the region, and daily infections had fallen to about 200 by December. But cases are rising again just weeks after the country reported its first local omicron transmission.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-indonesia-jakarta-5b340c89bad58f692bd131b8ac7105fb>

COVID hits one of the last uninfected places on the planet

When the coronavirus began spreading around the world, the remote Pacific archipelago of Kiribati closed its borders, ensuring the disease didn't reach its shores for nearly two full years. Kiribati finally began reopening this month, allowing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to

charter a plane to bring home 54 of the island nation's citizens. Many of those aboard were missionaries who had left Kiribati before the border closure to spread the faith abroad for what is commonly known as the Mormon church. Officials tested each returning passenger three times in nearby Fiji, required that they be vaccinated, and put them in quarantine with additional testing when they arrived home. It wasn't enough. More than half the passengers tested positive for the virus, which has now slipped out into the community and prompted the government to declare a state of disaster. An initial 36 positive cases from the flight had ballooned to 181 cases by Friday.

<https://apnews.com/27b40edd3d6e94c5b10185e49bbf182f>

Omicron drives US deaths higher than in fall's delta wave

Omicron, the highly contagious coronavirus variant sweeping across the country, is driving the daily American death toll higher than during last fall's delta wave, with deaths likely to keep rising for days or even weeks. The seven-day rolling average for daily new COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. has been climbing since mid-November, reaching 2,267 on Thursday and surpassing a September peak of 2,100 when delta was the dominant variant. Now omicron is estimated to account for nearly all the virus circulating in the nation. And even though it causes less severe disease for most people, the fact that it is more transmissible means more people are falling ill and dying. "Omicron will push us over a million deaths," said Andrew Noymer, a public health professor at the University of California, Irvine. "That will cause a lot of soul searching. There will be a lot of discussion about what we could have done differently, how many of the deaths were preventable."

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-business-health-california-public-health-83c0a053bfdd615b5ae7170007c2f1f9>

In Italy, COVID wards filled with unvaccinated elderly people as Omicron swept nation

As the Omicron variant swept Italy late last year, it was unvaccinated elderly people and those who had not had a booster dose four or more months after their initial shots who were most likely to go to hospital or die from COVID-19, according to data and doctors. Cases in hospitals have started to plateau, offering a sign that the current wave - which started with the emergence of Omicron in late November and pushed infections to record highs - may be close to peaking, doctors say. The data covering the period Nov. 19- Jan. 2 and published in recent weeks provide some of the most detailed insight into who was likely falling very ill from the newest coronavirus variant.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/italy-covid-wards-filled-with-unvaccinated-elderly-people-omicron-swept-nation-2022-01-28/>

Beijing Steps Up Covid-19 Control Measures Ahead of Lunar New Year, Winter Olympics

China appears to have brought two recent large coronavirus outbreaks under control and has turned its focus to Beijing, where health authorities are ramping up testing and tightening containment protocols as the Chinese capital prepares for the Lunar New Year and the Winter Olympics. Chinese authorities this week lifted a roughly monthlong lockdown of the central Chinese city of Xi'an, where a Delta outbreak had spread last month. The port city of Tianjin, which neighbors Beijing, declared victory over an Omicron outbreak, lifting most of the restrictions on its citizens. On Thursday, Beijing reported 19 of the country's 49 locally transmitted Covid-19 cases from the past two days, according to official data provided by the National Health Commission. While the majority of Beijing's cases had been infected with the Delta strain, six patients tested positive for the Omicron variant, Beijing's government said during a news conference Wednesday.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/beijing-steps-up-covid-19-control-measures-ahead-of-lunar-new-year-winter-olympics-11643286485>

Colorado Detects Faster-Spreading Omicron Sub-Variant

Colorado detected a single case of the Covid-19 omicron BA.2 sub-variant, which can spread faster and potentially "cause an increase in cases temporarily," a state health official said Thursday. The

sub-variant, which has been detected in Europe and Asia, was identified in a person in the Denver area late last month, Rachel Herlihy, state epidemiologist, said during an online briefing. Other states have detected a small number of cases. “It could potentially result in an increased rate of transmission at least for a brief period of time,” Herlihy said. “There is no evidence that it causes any sort of increased level of severity.”

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-27/colorado-detects-faster-spreading-omicron-sub-variant>