

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

9th Mar 2022

Lockdown Exit

New Zealand to Reduce Covid Self-Isolation Period to Seven Days

New Zealand will reduce the isolation period for Covid-19 cases and their household contacts to seven days in order to get more people back to work. The period will reduce from 10 days effective at 11:59 p.m. on Friday March 11 in Wellington, Minister for Covid Response Chris Hipkins said in a statement. "The most up to date public health advice is that there is a decline in infectiousness of omicron over time, and that in most cases transmission occurs within seven days," he said. "Seven days isolation will break the vast majority of potential transmissions, while ensuring people can get back to work quicker and therefore reducing the impact on business operations."

https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-09/new-zealand-to-reduce-covid-self-isolation-period-to-seven-days?utm_source=google&utm_medium=bd&cmpld=google

Puerto Rico to lift mask mandate as COVID-19 cases ease

Puerto Rico's governor announced that he is ending a requirement for mask use indoors for the second time since the pandemic began as the number of cases and hospitalizations ease. The change will take effect Thursday with a few exceptions. Face masks will still be required in health facilities and nursing homes. In addition, starting March 10, domestic travelers will no longer have to present proof of vaccination or a negative coronavirus test or fill out a currently required form.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/puerto-rico-covid-san-juan-b2030655.html>

Romanian government to lift COVID restrictions from March 9

Romania will lift all COVID restrictions from Wednesday including requiring a digital pass to access institutions and the obligation to wear protective masks both indoors and outside, Health Minister Alexandru Rafila said on Tuesday. The decision stems from the coalition government's decision to no longer extend a nation-wide state of alert two years after the pandemic first hit Romania. The country remains the European Union's second-least vaccinated state, with just under 42% of the population fully inoculated amid distrust in state institutions and poor vaccine education

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/romanian-government-lift-covid-restrictions-march-9-2022-03-08/>

Pfizer to Submit Data to FDA on Fourth Covid Shot Soon, CEO Says

Pfizer Inc. will soon submit data to U.S. regulators on a fourth dose of its Covid-19 vaccine, Chief Executive Officer Albert Bourla said. Bourla said he spent Tuesday morning reviewing new data from various Covid vaccine studies, including one looking at the effects of a fourth dose of the currently available vaccine, as well as a new formulation that will protect against multiple coronavirus variants. "They look encouraging," Bourla said in an interview on Bloomberg Television's "Balance of Power With David Westin," noting that Pfizer still needs to collect more information.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-08/pfizer-to-submit-data-to-fda-on-fourth-covid-shot-soon-ceo-says>

As virus cases go from 1 to 24000, New Zealand changes tack

Back in August, New Zealand's government put the entire nation on lockdown after a single community case of the coronavirus was detected. On Tuesday, when new daily cases hit a record of nearly 24,000, officials told hospital workers they could help out on understaffed COVID-19 wards even if they were mildly sick themselves. It was the latest sign of just how radically New Zealand's approach to the virus has shifted, moving from elimination to suppression and now to something

approaching acceptance as the omicron variant has taken hold. Experts say New Zealand's sometimes counterintuitive actions have likely saved thousands of lives by allowing the nation to mostly avoid earlier, more deadly variants and buying time to get people vaccinated. The nation of 5 million has reported just 65 virus deaths since the pandemic began.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-education-new-zealand-pandemics-617bdd9ffd2c53464287ad031ccf3877>

Mask mandates go away in schools, but parent worries persist

Major school districts around the US are allowing students into classrooms without masks for the first time in nearly two years, eliminating rules that stirred up intense fights among educators, school boards and parents throughout the pandemic. New York City became the latest school district to do away with its mask requirement Monday and Philadelphia is poised to lift its mandate Wednesday, joining big cities such as Houston and Dallas and a number of a states that made similar moves in the last week. Chicago schools will end their mask mandate next Monday.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-chicago-new-york-city-school-boards-503601d87087668ee95a0a35bca2ef77>

Experts map out 'new normal' as US enters third pandemic year

As America enters the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic and approaches the 2-year anniversary of business and school shutdowns put in place when little was known about the novel coronavirus, a group of public health experts have published a new roadmap laying out how the country can enter the "new normal" stage of the pandemic and manage the virus without eliminating it. The roadmap recommends against future school closings, suggests the United States will need to manufacture 1 billion at-home COVID-19 tests per month, and says the nation can lift pandemic restrictions when it is tallying 165 or fewer deaths per day from the virus.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/03/experts-map-out-new-normal-us-enters-third-pandemic-year>

Exit Strategies

Florida's top health official says healthy children should not get coronavirus vaccine

Florida's governor and chief health official announced a new state policy that will recommend against giving a coronavirus vaccine to healthy children, regardless of their age — a policy that flies in the face of recommendations by every medical group in the nation. The announcement came at the conclusion of a 90-minute forum that Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) hosted in West Palm Beach. "The Curtain Close on COVID Theater" was live-streamed from a studio with hundreds of participants appearing on a towering screen behind the panelists. Florida Surgeon General Joseph Ladapo prefaced the change by deriding the school closures and mask and vaccine mandates issued by many states since the start of the pandemic as "terrible, harmful policies."

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/03/07/florida-surgeon-general-opposes-childrens-covid-vaccines/>

Covid disappointments spur Africa's homegrown vaccine makers

African countries had hoped the Covax vaccine-sharing scheme would guarantee them timely access to jabs, but a lack of regional vaccine production and a bidding war with richer, western nations meant much of the continent has been last in line for doses. According to the FT's vaccine tracker, 73 per cent of EU residents have been fully vaccinated against Covid, compared with 13 per cent in Africa. Health authorities and scientific institutions in Africa have now set themselves a different target. By 2040 they want 60 per cent of all vaccines given on the continent to be manufactured in Africa, up from 1 per cent now.

<https://www.ft.com/content/43cbe4b1-ac0c-43f0-9d74-ea5db93a1201>

Malaysia to reopen borders from April with quarantine waiver

Malaysia will reopen its borders fully from April 1 and allow entry without quarantine for visitors vaccinated against COVID-19, Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob said on Tuesday. Malaysia has

since March 2020 maintained some of the tightest entry curbs in Asia to try to contain coronavirus outbreaks, with most foreign nationals barred from entry and returning Malaysians required to undergo quarantine.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/malaysia-reopen-borders-april-with-quarantine-waiver-2022-03-08/>

Florida breaks with CDC, recommends no COVID vaccine for healthy children

Florida's top health official said on Monday the state would recommend against the COVID-19 vaccine for healthy children, breaking with guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In announcing the move during press briefing convened by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, the state's surgeon general Dr. Joseph Lapado cited studies that showed few COVID fatalities among healthy children and elevated risk among young boys receiving the vaccine of side effects such as myocarditis.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/florida-breaks-with-cdc-recommends-no-covid-vaccine-healthy-children-2022-03-07/>

Japan's ANA lines up low-cost carrier in bet on post-COVID tourism boom

Japanese airline ANA Holdings Inc plans to launch a new international low-cost carrier in late 2023 or early 2024, joining its rival Japan Airlines Co in a bet on a revival in tourism as the impact of the COVID pandemic fades. ANA said on Tuesday the carrier, Air Japan, would fly mid-range international flights to Asia-Pacific destinations, without disclosing planned routes. ANA already has a separate low cost carrier (LCC), Peach Aviation, which flies domestic routes as well as to a handful of short-haul Asian destinations.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/japans-ana-lines-up-low-cost-carrier-bet-post-covid-tourism-boom-2022-03-08/>

Unvaccinated Elderly Send Hong Kong's Covid-19 Death Rate to World's Highest

Almost a year ago, Rio Ling decided to hold off on vaccinating his 86-year-old father against the coronavirus because he was more worried about possible side effects than the virus itself, given that Hong Kong had kept cases low under its "Zero-Covid" policy. By the time he gave the go-ahead in January, after the Omicron variant had broken through the city's defenses, it was too late. A few hours after finally receiving the inoculation in late February, Mr. Ling's dad, who has high blood pressure and dementia, tested positive for Covid-19. Half a million people over 70 weren't vaccinated when Omicron began surging through the city. Like other places, Hong Kong gave its elderly priority to get their shots, but persistent fears about vaccine safety, fueled by local media reports about deaths following vaccinations, and Hong Kong's low case count led many to delay.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/unvaccinated-elderly-send-hong-kongs-covid-19-death-rate-to-worlds-highest-11646748091>

WHO says COVID boosters needed, reversing previous call

An expert group convened by the World Health Organization said Tuesday it "strongly supports urgent and broad access" to booster doses amid the global spread of omicron, in a reversal of the U.N. agency's insistence last year that boosters weren't necessary and contributed to vaccine inequity. In a statement, WHO said its expert group concluded that immunization with authorized COVID-19 vaccines provide high levels of protection against severe disease and death amid the continuing spread of the hugely contagious omicron variant. WHO said in January that boosters were recommended once countries had adequate supplies and after protecting their most vulnerable.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-united-nations-immunizations-world-health-organization-fa6ca68d114782c9047ed0c9c167dac5>

Rio relaxes the use of masks as pandemic wanes in Brazil

Rio de Janeiro is relaxing the use of masks as the COVID-19 pandemic wanes in Brazil. "Following the determinations of our scientific committee we will have a decree tomorrow to end the mandatory

use of masks indoors and outdoors," Rio Mayor Eduardo Paes said on Twitter on Monday. Earlier, data from Johns Hopkins University showed the global death toll of the virus surpassed 6 million people. Brazil is one of the hardest-hit nations, counting more than 650,000 confirmed deaths, the second most after the United States.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-covid-19-pandemic-brazil-rio-de-janeiro-f56e083377c4153fa16a231dfa9a24af>

China says Hong Kong must stick to "dynamic zero" COVID strategy

A top Chinese health official rallied embattled Hong Kong on Tuesday to stick with a "dynamic zero" coronavirus strategy and warned that the city's "lifeline" health system was at risk and the situation had to be turned around as soon as possible. Hong Kong reported more than 43,100 new cases on Tuesday after the launch of an online platform for people to record infections in a surge that has seen the city suffering the most deaths globally per million people in the week to March 6, according to the Our World in Data publication. China has championed the "dynamic zero" strategy that involves stamping out infections with strict mitigation measures as opposed to the approach adopted in other places of relying on high vaccination rates and moderate mitigation like masks in an effort to "live with COVID".

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-says-hong-kongs-priority-is-cut-covid-infections-deaths-2022-03-08/>

Partisan Exits

Trucker convoy laps Washington, DC, beltway to protest Covid-19 measures

A convoy of vehicles lapped the Washington, DC, beltway Sunday morning to demand an end to Covid-19 mandates and restrictions. The protests come at a time when many pandemic-related mandates and restrictions -- imposed by state and local governments rather than lawmakers in Washington -- have already begun being lifted in much of the country. The group planned to drive at least two loops around the beltway before returning to Hagerstown, Maryland, Maureen Steele, an organizer with the "People's Convoy" told CNN. Sunday's protest may mark the beginning of several days of disruptions, according to District of Columbia emergency management officials.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/06/us/trucker-convoy-protest-washington-dc-sunday/index.html>

Continued Lockdown

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<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-says-hong-kongs-priority-is-cut-covid-infections-deaths-2022-03-08/>

Scientific Viewpoint

Moderna looks to enforce its Covid-19 vaccine patents in wealthy countries

Amid intense public pressure, Moderna (MRNA) updated a pledge never to enforce patents for its Covid-19 vaccines against manufacturers that supply dozens of low- and middle-income countries as part of a World Health Organization program. But at the same time, the vaccine maker indicated it would enforce its patents in wealthier nations. In an announcement issued late Monday, the company maintained that supplies beyond the 92 countries covered by the WHO's COVAX program

are “no longer a barrier to access” and, as a result, licenses will be offered to manufacturers for its technology on “commercially reasonable terms.” There was no detail about the technologies that would be covered or timing to enforce its patents.

<https://www.statnews.com/pharmalot/2022/03/08/covid19-vaccine-patent-moderna-who-africa/>

The U.S. is about to approve a fourth COVID vaccine that could be a silver bullet solution to the anti-vax crisis

It might not be long until a fourth COVID vaccine is available in the U.S., and it’s a big deal. Novavax Inc.’s COVID-19 vaccine is on its way towards authorization from the U.S. Food & Drug Administration after formally submitting a request in late January. The company says it has resolved the manufacturing issues that had delayed their application, and now expects approval from the FDA in the coming weeks, according to reporting from the Wall Street Journal. In clinical trials first published in January 2021, Novavax’s vaccine was up to 90% effective in preventing severe COVID-19 infections, on par with the already-approved vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna. But questions remained about the company’s manufacturing capabilities that have delayed its ability to bring the vaccine to market. The Maryland-based biotech firm has already won approval for its vaccine in Australia, India, the European Commission and several other countries since last November.

<https://fortune.com/2022/03/07/fourth-covid-vaccine-novavax-anti-vax-protein-mrna/>

French study shows COVID vaccine efficacy 94% against severe outcomes

In late December 2019, France began administering vaccinations against coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) to its population. At the end of 2021, 77% of the entire population were fully vaccinated, and 91% of those 18 years or older. During these times, France experienced three epidemic waves caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) variants Alpha, Delta, and Omicron. Vaccination administration was stratified among the different population groups due to limited availability, beginning with those at most risk of severe COVID-19-related complications and those who work in healthcare. Moderna, Pfizer/BioNTech, AstraZeneca, and Janssen were the four Covid-19 vaccine brands utilized. With the exception of the Janssen vaccine, which only required one dosage, a vaccination program was initially considered complete following two doses. A complete vaccination cycle had become a prerequisite for obtaining a French health permit, which became effective in June and was first necessary to enter events and places with large crowds. In August, the health pass was expanded to include admission to all museums, bars, restaurants, railways, and other public venues.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20220307/French-study-shows-COVID-vaccine-efficacy-9425-against-severe-outcomes.aspx>

Who’s at the greatest risk of being hospitalized by COVID-19? New Public Health data breaks it down

New data from Newfoundland and Labrador’s Department of Health highlights who is at the greatest risk of severe health outcomes due to COVID-19 as the province aims to lift all public health restrictions later this month. According to the data provided to CBC News last week, 138 people were admitted to hospital due to COVID-19 from Dec. 15, deemed the beginning of the province’s Omicron wave, to Feb. 28. For comparison, Newfoundland and Labrador reported more than 24,000 cases of the virus in that period but the actual number is much higher, as not all positive cases in the province were reported to public health. The data is broken down into two categories: age and vaccination status. Sixty-seven of the 138 hospitalizations, or about 49 per cent, were people over the age of 70. Additionally, 23 people were in their 60s, 26 were in their 50s, six were in their 40s, four were between the ages of 20 and 39 and 12 people were under the age of 20.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/omicron-hospitalizations-death-data-1.6375968>

COVID-19 associated with "significant, deleterious impact" on brain, finds U.K. study

Scans and cognition tests collected from hundreds of people suggest coronavirus infection is associated with "a significant, deleterious" change in the brain, according to a study published Monday from scientists in the United Kingdom. The paper, published in the journal Nature, draws on data in the U.K. Biobank from 401 people between the ages of 51 and 81 who had COVID-19 through April 2021. Researchers analyzed data from brain scans and tests collected from participants both before they were infected with the disease, and from a second round conducted later, close to five months on average after they tested positive.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/covid-19-impact-on-brain-uk-study/>

Moderna to share vaccine tech, commits to never enforce COVID-19 jab patents

Moderna has pledged never to enforce its coronavirus vaccine patents in selected low- and middle-income countries and is launching a new initiative to give external researchers access to its technology. The announcement comes amid increasing pressure on the U.S. biotech firm, which pulled in more than \$12 billion in 2021, to share its technology with initiatives aimed at increasing vaccine manufacturing capacity in low- and middle-income countries. "It's a very big announcement," CEO Stéphane Bancel told POLITICO in an interview. Bancel was visibly excited when he explained that for years his team been working on various infectious diseases but as a small company they had been limited in what they could do. The runaway success of their mRNA coronavirus vaccine has opened new doors. "We want to make sure that we have all the tools to provide the world with a much better response, if God forbid something happens again," said Bancel.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/moderna-share-vaccine-tech-never-enforce-covid19-patents/>

COVID-19: New study could lead to life-saving treatment for severe cases

The world's largest genetic study of people with severe COVID has identified DNA variations that could lead to new life-saving treatments for the disease. The research identified 16 changes to the DNA sequence of critically ill COVID patients that affected their immune response, or increased the risk of blood clotting and inflammation in the lungs. The researchers in the GenOMICC consortium, which involved almost every intensive care unit in the UK, say the findings map out new molecular targets for drugs that are currently used to treat other medical conditions. Professor Kenneth Baillie, the study's chief investigator and a critical care consultant at the University of Edinburgh, said: "We have shown for the first time in the history of critical care medicine that an infectious disease that causes organ failure is treatable by suppressing the immune system.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-new-study-could-lead-to-life-saving-treatment-for-severe-cases-12560046>

COVID-19 can cause brain shrinkage: study

A new study by Oxford University has found COVID-19 can cause the brain to shrink, reduce grey matter in the regions that control emotion and memory, and damage areas that control the sense of smell.

<https://www.reuters.com/video/watch/idspdY?now=true>

Moderna plots vaccines against 15 pathogens with future pandemic potential

Moderna Inc said on Monday it plans to develop and begin testing vaccines targeting 15 of the world's most worrisome pathogens by 2025 and will permanently waive its COVID-19 vaccine patents for shots intended for certain low- and middle-income countries. The U.S. biotechnology company also said it will make its messenger RNA (mRNA) technology available to researchers working on new vaccines for emerging and neglected diseases through a program called mRNA Access. Moderna announced its strategy ahead of the Global Pandemic Preparedness Summit sponsored by the UK government and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), an international coalition set up five years ago to prepare for future disease threats.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/moderna-plots-vaccines-against-15-pathogens-with-future-pandemic-potential-2022-03-08/>

Omicron infections contagious for at least 6 days; Takeda drug shows promise as COVID treatment

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. Omicron infections are contagious for at least 6 days. Patients infected with the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 remain contagious for just as long as patients infected with earlier variants, according to a small study. Researchers took blood samples from 56 newly-diagnosed patients, including 37 with Delta infections and 19 with Omicron infections. All were mildly ill, such as with flu-like symptoms, but none were hospitalized.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/omicron-infections-contagious-least-6-days-takeda-drug-shows-promise-covid-2022-03-07/>

Scientists identify new gene differences in severe COVID patients

Scientists have pinpointed 16 new genetic variants in people who developed severe COVID-19 in a large study published on Monday that could help researchers develop treatments for very sick patients. The results suggest that people with severe COVID have genes that predispose them to one of two problems: failure to limit the ability of the virus to make copies of itself, or excessive inflammation and blood clotting. The scientists said their discoveries, published in the journal Nature, could help prioritise the likely treatments that could work against the disease. Eventually, the information could even help predict which patients were likely to become severely ill.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/scientists-identify-new-gene-differences-severe-covid-patients-2022-03-07/>

Covid Can Shrink the Brain as Much as a Decade of Aging, Study Finds

Even a mild case of Covid-19 can damage the brain and addle thinking, scientists found in a study that highlights the illness's alarming impact on mental function. Researchers identified Covid-associated brain damage months after infection, including in the region linked to smell, and shrinkage in size equivalent to as much as a decade of normal aging. The changes were linked to cognitive decline in the study, which was published Monday in the journal Nature. The findings represent striking evidence of the virus's impact on the central nervous system. More research will be required to understand whether the evidence from the Wellcome Centre for Integrative Neuroimaging at the University of Oxford means Covid-19 will exacerbate the global burden of dementia -- which cost an estimated \$1.3 trillion in the year the pandemic began -- and other neurodegenerative conditions.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-07/brain-shrinkage-cognitive-decline-found-months-after-mild-covid>

Health groups press for more wildlife SARS-CoV-2 tracking

The statement on animal surveillance came from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), and the World Health Organization (WHO). They said though wildlife doesn't play a key transmission role in humans, SARS-CoV-2 spread in animal populations can affect their health and lead to the emergence of new variants. So far, farmed mink and pet hamsters have shown the capacity to infect humans, and scientists are reviewing a possible case of transmission between white-tailed deer and a human. And in the United States, large numbers of white-tail deer have been shown to carry the virus, underscoring concerns about establishment of an animal reservoir.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/03/health-groups-press-more-wildlife-sars-cov-2-tracking>

COVID deaths vary by race, community, social factors

Social determinants of health (SDOH) tied to COVID-19 death rates varied by race and community type in the first year of the pandemic, suggests an observational spatial analysis involving 3,142 counties in all 50 US states and Washington, DC. The study was published late last week in JAMA Network Open. SDOH are nonmedical factors, such as where people live and work, that influence health outcomes such as COVID-19 infection and death. "Racial disparities in health largely emanate from the inequitable access to social, economic, and physical or built environmental conditions resulting from racism in the US," the researchers wrote. "Specifically, racism interacts with and exists within societal structures and systems to shape the major SDOH."

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/03/covid-deaths-vary-race-community-social-factors>

Less than 500 COVID-19 patients in serious condition

A total of 4,769 new COVID-19 cases were diagnosed across Israel on Monday, Israel's Health Ministry reported Tuesday morning. The new cases bring the countrywide total to 48,408 active cases, among them 969 hospitalized patients.

<https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/323529>

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Coronavirus Resurgence

Almost 750,000 kids below 18 contracted Covid-19 since 2020, Dewan Rakyat told

There were almost 750,000 Covid-19 cases involving those under 18-years-old recorded between Jan 25, 2020 and March 6 this year. Deputy Health Minister I Datuk Dr Noor Azmi Ghazali said from the 748,037 cases, a total of 40.3 per cent (301,268 cases) involved children aged five to 11. "In addition, 157 deaths due to Covid-19 were reported among those under 18, with 39 deaths (24.8 per cent) among children aged five to 11," he told the Dewan Rakyat today. Dr Noor Azmi said the Health Ministry also established that there had been an increase in Covid-19 infections among children, especially after schools reopened early this year.

<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2022/03/778043/almost-750000-kids-below-18-contracted-covid-19-2020-dewan-rakyat-told>

WA records another COVID-19 record with 2,847 new cases, as number in hospital jumps to 48

WA's Deputy Premier is warning the state is headed for more disruptions to services, with a record 2,847 new COVID-19 cases detected and the number of people in hospital continuing to grow. The latest reported infections bring the total number of active cases in WA to 14,458, with 48 in hospital — up from 36 yesterday. None of the hospital cases are in ICU. The majority of new cases, 1,530, were self-reported through rapid antigen tests. The remaining 1,317 were detected through 11,632 PCR tests, a significant increase from the previous day's 8,828 tests, despite yesterday being a public holiday.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-03-08/wa-records-new-covid-19-record-2847-cases-48-in-hospital/100890526>

Covid-19 cases creating burden on hospitals - minister

The number of people with Covid-19 in hospitals around the country has risen by over 30% in the last week. There were 803 Covid patients in hospital as of 8am this morning, with 51 of those in ICU. That figure is an increase of 187 compared to last Tuesday. However, it is down five on the same time yesterday, which is the first daily reduction in 10 days. The 808 people with the coronavirus in hospital on Monday, represented the highest level in six weeks, since 824 on 25 January.

<https://www.rte.ie/news/coronavirus/2022/0308/1285081-coronavirus-ireland/>

Covid-19 weekly deaths in England and Wales fall to half of Omicron peak

The number of deaths involving coronavirus registered each week in England and Wales has dropped to around half the level seen at the peak of the recent Omicron wave of infections. Some 766 deaths registered in the week ending February 25 mentioned Covid-19 on the death certificate, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This is down 48% from the 1,484 deaths registered in the week to January 21 – the highest weekly total during the latest wave of the virus. It is also the fifth week-on-week fall in a row.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/omicron-wales-england-office-for-national-statistics-covid-b2030893.html>

Mexico reports 42 more COVID deaths, 1684 new cases

Mexico reported 42 more confirmed fatalities from COVID-19 on Monday, bringing the total death toll in the country since the pandemic began to 319,901, according to health ministry data. The country also reported 1,684 new confirmed cases of the virus, the lowest count in a 24-hour period so far this year, according to a Reuters tally, bringing the total number of confirmed cases to 5,566,669.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/mexico-reports-42-more-covid-deaths-1684-new-cases-2022-03-08/>

Hong Kong reports over 43000 new COVID cases after new reporting system launched

Hong Kong reported more than 43,000 new coronavirus infections on Tuesday, a day after the launch of an online self reporting platform which lets residents register their own rapid antigen tests results.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/hong-kong-reports-over-43000-new-covid-cases-after-new-reporting-system-launched-2022-03-08/>

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As virus cases go from 1 to 24,000, New Zealand changes tack

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<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-education-new-zealand-pandemics-617bdd9ffd2c53464287ad031ccf3877>