

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

4th Apr 2022

Lockdown Exit

China's Covid Variants: New Omicron Virus Subtype Discovered

China added more than 13,000 new Covid-19 infections with state media reporting a case infected with a new subtype of the omicron variant. The new iteration of the virus, isolated from a mild Covid-19 patient in a city less than 70 kilometers (43 miles) from Shanghai, evolves from the BA.1.1 branch of the omicron variant, Global Times reported, citing sequencing data from local health authorities. The report said the subtype doesn't match other coronavirus that's causing Covid in China nor those submitted to GISAID, where scientists around the world share the coronavirus they sequenced as a way to monitor mutations. A case in Dalian city in northern China reported on Friday also didn't match any coronavirus found domestically, the municipal government said on its WeChat account.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-03/china-adds-over-13-000-covid-cases-as-shanghai-outbreak-widens>

'One per cent of UK population' newly infected with Covid-19 every day

Around one in every 100 people in the UK is likely to have been newly infected with Covid-19 per day during the current surge of the virus, figures suggest. Infections are estimated to have climbed as high as 657,300 every day by March 16, according to new modelling published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This is the equivalent of roughly 1% of the population. It is also more than double the number of daily infections that were occurring at the end of February. The figures suggest that by mid-March the virus was circulating at levels higher even than those reached during the Omicron-led surge at the start of the year.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/uknews/e2-80-98one-per-cent-of-uk-population-e2-80-99-newly-infected-with-covid-19-every-day/ar-AAVLn2a>

Rising Covid infections pile pressure on hospitals

Surging coronavirus infections are putting hospitals across the UK under mounting pressure and undermining efforts to get on top of waiting lists more than two years after the start of the pandemic. Several NHS trusts across England have been forced to declare critical incidents in recent weeks as the number of Covid-19 cases has increased. Ambulance services are reporting widespread delays at hospitals and in reaching those dialling 999.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/rising-covid-infections-pile-pressure-on-hospitals-hqbrvbrzs>

Senators Eye \$10 Billion Covid-19 Deal Ahead of Possible Resurgence

Senators are looking to close a deal this coming week to reappropriate roughly \$10 billion to pay for Covid-19 treatments and vaccines, with lawmakers saying they need to act quickly ahead of a possible resurgence of the pandemic. A bipartisan group of senators has sought to give the Biden administration some of what it has requested to address future variants of Covid-19 and secure a domestic supply of tests, vaccines and treatments in coming months, as well as send vaccines abroad. Negotiators are looking at pandemic-related funds that Congress has previously passed that remain unspent, after Republicans resisted new outlays and many Democrats rejected a previous deal involving \$15.6 billion in repurposed funding.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/senators-eye-10-billion-covid-19-deal-ahead-of-possible-resurgence-11648891802>

WHO Suspends Procurement, Supply of Bharat Biotech Covid Vaccine

The World Health Organization suspended procurement and supply of Covaxin, a Covid-19 vaccine made by Bharat Biotech International Ltd., citing issues following an inspection at the company's facilities. The Indian vaccine maker has committed to address deficiencies in good manufacturing practices and is developing a corrective and preventive action plan, the World Health Organization said, without specifying when the suspension will be lifted. It recommended countries which have received the vaccine to "take actions as appropriate." The World Health Organization granted emergency use authorization to the vaccine co-developed by India's medical research agency and the local manufacturer in November. It said the suspension doesn't change the vaccine's risk assessment, and data indicates it is effective and no safety concerns exist.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-03/who-suspends-procurement-supply-of-bharat-biotech-covid-vaccine>

New Omicron variant XE found in UK but 'too soon to say' how contagious it is

A new Covid variant has been found in the UK but experts say it's too soon to know if it is more transmissible than previous strains. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) said it was studying XE - a mutation of the BA.1 and BA.2 Omicron strains, referred to as a "recombinant". The government body said that, as of 22 March, 637 cases of XE had been detected in England, only a small fraction of the tens of thousands of Covid cases being reported every day since restrictions were lifted.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/new-omicron-variant-xe-coronavirus-b2049041.html>

China expects sharp drop in holiday travel due to COVID outbreaks

China's transport ministry expects a 20% drop in road traffic and a 55% fall in flights during the three-day Qingming holiday due to a flare-up of COVID-19 cases in the country. More than 27 Chinese provinces and regions have recently reported coronavirus cases, mostly the highly transmissible Omicron variant, forcing the authorities to impose stringent mobility restrictions or even city-wide lockdowns. Chinese typically travel back to their home towns to worship their ancestors during the tomb-sweeping festival.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-expects-sharp-drop-holiday-travel-due-covid-outbreaks-2022-04-03/>

Shanghai asks entire city to self-test for COVID as frustration grows

Shanghai on Sunday ordered its 26 million residents to undergo two more rounds of tests for COVID-19 as public anger grows over how authorities in China's most populous city are tackling a record coronavirus surge. Residents should self-test on Sunday using antigen kits and report any positive results, Shanghai government officials told a news conference, while a nucleic acid test would be conducted citywide on Monday. "The main task is to completely eliminate risk points and to cut off the chain of transmission so that we can curb the spread of the epidemic as soon as possible," said Wu Qianyu, an inspector from Shanghai Municipal Health Commission.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-reports-1506-new-covid-cases-april-2-vs-2129-day-earlier-2022-04-03/>

NYC to keep school mask rule for kids aged 2 to 4 in place

With COVID-19 cases rising once again, New York City is keeping a mask mandate for children under 5 in place and will appeal a judge's ruling that struck it down, Mayor Eric Adams announced Friday. City health officials are recommending that everyone cover their faces in indoor public settings and will continue to require masks for children aged 2 to 4 in schools and daycare centers, Adams said. Adams had said previously that the mask mandate for young children would be lifted on April 4 if coronavirus numbers remained low. New York City is now averaging just under 1,300 new cases of COVID-19 per day, more than twice the number on the average day in early March.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-new-york-new-york-city-nyc-state-wire-3674f253a8e7fb12ef9c95f21d1eae0f>

Why We Are Covid Broke

Washington dysfunction is so comprehensive, it's sometimes difficult to know where to start. So

there is usefulness in a recent White House missive to Congress—which in a few short pages neatly sums up the dishonesty and malpractice of today’s Beltway. “Dear Madame Speaker,” begins the March 15 letter, devoted to the topic of Covid poverty. “We are notifying you of the following actions necessitated by the lack of critical funding.” Office of Management and Budget Director Shalanda Young and White House Covid coordinator Jeffrey Zients explain that unless Congress supplies tens of billions more in taxpayer dollars, the federal government will no longer be able to “secure sufficient booster doses,” will end “the purchase of monoclonal antibody treatments,” will halt “critical testing,” and will scale back “preventive treatments for the immunocompromised.”

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/kimberley-strassel-covid-broke-emergency-spending-pandemic-relief-american-rescue-plan-washington-budget-negotiations-boosters-testing-waste-fraud-11648735209>

S.Korea likely to lift outdoor mask mandate, most COVID curbs this month

South Korea said on Friday it would further relax its social distancing rules next week and possibly scrap most pandemic-related curbs later this month, including an obligation to wear masks outdoors. From April 4, a curfew on eateries and other businesses will be pushed back to midnight from 11 p.m., and private gatherings of up to 10 people will be allowed, Health Minister Kwon Deok-cheol said. The decision is South Korea's latest step in easing anti-coronavirus measures, after scrapping vaccine mandates and a mandatory quarantine for vaccinated travellers arriving from overseas, despite an ongoing Omicron wave.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/skorea-likely-lift-outdoor-mask-mandate-most-covid-curbs-this-month-2022-04-01/>

Italy ends COVID-19 state of emergency, curbs to be lifted gradually

Italy on Friday began to phase out its COVID-19 restrictions, ending a state of emergency public authorities declared more than two years ago that allowed it to bypass bureaucracy and swiftly impose rules via decrees. The state of emergency was introduced on Jan. 31, 2020, but Prime Minister Mario Draghi's government announced plans in March to return to normal after deciding not to extend it. read more It officially ended on Thursday. "A new phase is beginning ... This does not mean that the pandemic is over. There is no 'off' button that magically makes the virus disappear," Health Minister Roberto Speranza told the newspaper *la Repubblica*.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/italy-ends-covid-19-state-emergency-curbs-be-lifted-gradually-2022-04-01/>

COVID fears raise Japan's dementia risks as seniors shun hospitals

Doctors warn avoiding treatment could cut healthy life expectancy. The spread of COVID-19 is not the only pandemic-related health risk cropping up in Japan. Seniors, who are more likely to fall seriously ill if they contract the virus, are putting off visiting hospitals for other ailments.

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Datawatch/COVID-fears-raise-japan-s-dementia-risks-as-seniors-shun-hospitals>

Exit Strategies

Covid vaccine Covaxin supply through UN procurement agencies suspended by WHO

In a statement issued by the organisation on Saturday, the suspension has been carried out in response to the outcomes of its post EUL (emergency use authorisation) inspection, which was held between March 14 and 22, 2022 and the need to conduct process and facility upgrade to address recently identified GMP (good manufacturing practice) deficiencies. Due to suspension of production for export, there will be interruption in supply of Covaxin, WHO said. The risk assessment to date does not show change in the risk-benefit ratio. The data, which is available to WHO, shows the vaccine is still effective and there is no safety concern, WHO said.

<https://www.wionews.com/india-news/covid-vaccine-covaxin-supply-through-un-procurement-agencies-suspended-by-who-467944>

In Shanghai, Strict Covid Rules Separate Children From Parents

As a viral video ricocheted around China's internet, showing toddlers and infants in a Shanghai medical facility, crying as they were crammed in threes and fours on metal-barred beds, one 39-year-old mother was particularly distraught. "I searched for any sight of my daughter in the video but couldn't find her," said the mother, who asked to be identified only by her surname, Zhu. Ms. Zhu said she had been separated from her 2½-year-old daughter on Tuesday after they tested positive for Covid in Shanghai, home of what is quickly becoming China's biggest coronavirus outbreak in more than two years. In the following days, Ms. Zhu said she was left with virtually no news or photos of her daughter, who she said was sent to a separate facility for Covid-infected children and infants.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/in-shanghai-strict-covid-rules-separate-children-from-parents-11648961849>

Masks Come Off, Mandates Loosen as Companies Relax Covid-19 Protocols

U.S. companies are relaxing many of the vaccine and other Covid-related requirements that had become a staple of corporate life in the pandemic. As office occupancy nears pandemic-era highs in many U.S. cities, a number of employers have communicated new, looser safety protocols to workers. Some companies made masks optional in the office for all workers, while others dropped testing requirements for the unvaccinated or simplified the daily return-to-office questionnaires. The new protocols in many cases follow updated guidance from health authorities, who have moved away from blanket preventive measures in favor of a more targeted approach focused on limiting infection and severe illness in high-risk areas. Infections have edged up again in the U.S. and the Omicron BA.2 variant accounts for more new Covid-19 cases.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/masks-come-off-mandates-loosen-as-companies-relax-covid-19-protocols-11648980181>

I Just Had Covid. Should I Wait to Get Boosted?

I'm over 50, triple-vaxxed with Moderna and I had Covid-19 in late February. Should I get a booster shot now or wait three or four months? The booster-timing game is one a lot of us have been playing. I've had friends tell me they've delayed getting boosters not just after a case of Covid, but also to lessen their risk of catching the virus before a big vacation or a wedding. It's just the latest iteration of pandemic-risk roulette. We're all trying to figure out how to get the most bang out of our booster. This past week, the Food and Drug Administration gave the green light for an additional booster — a fourth shot — for those over age 50. But many Americans still haven't gotten their first booster shot — or any shot. If you've had Covid since January or February, says Jessica Justman, an infectious disease specialist and epidemiologist at Columbia University Medical Center, it makes sense to hold off on a booster, no matter how old you are.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/newsletters/2022-04-03/i-just-had-covid-should-i-wait-to-get-boosted>

Sinopharm Says Second-Generation Vaccine Approved for Trial

China National Pharmaceutical Group Co. said its second-generation recombinant protein Covid-19 vaccine has received approval from Beijing for clinical trials. Better known as Sinopharm, the state-owned enterprise's vaccine-developing unit, China National Biotec Group, announced the news on its WeChat account on Sunday. The improved vaccine has already been approved by the United Arab Emirates as a booster shot and enhances immune response to the coronavirus, the company said in December. China is currently grappling with its worst infection outbreak since the early days of the pandemic, reporting more than 13,000 new Covid-19 cases on Sunday. Vice Premier Sun Chunlan arrived in the country's virus hotspot of Shanghai to oversee prevention efforts, as she ordered officials to curtail the outbreak "as soon as possible," according to Xinhua. Cases in the financial hub exceeded 8,000 on Saturday including 7,788 asymptomatic infections. Shanghai will start a new round of mass testing on Monday, authorities said.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-03/sinopharm-says-second-generation-vaccine-approved-for-trial>

Taiwan says new COVID cases won't affect re-opening plans

A recent rise in Taiwan's domestic COVID-19 cases will not affect plans to gradually re-open as hardly any of the new infections have caused serious illness, Premier Su Tseng-chang said on Sunday. Unlike large parts of the rest of the world, Taiwan has kept the pandemic well under control due to strict and early control measures, including an efficient contact and tracing system and largely closing its borders. In the first quarter of this year Taiwan reported 1,266 domestic cases, and only one death, though the government has been on alert as infections spiked over the past week or so, while remaining at comparatively low numbers, with 183 new cases on Sunday.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taiwan-says-new-covid-cases-wont-affect-re-opening-plans-2022-04-03/>

Indonesia greets Ramadan with mass prayer as COVID curbs ease

The world's largest Muslim-majority nation of Indonesia welcomed the start of the holy fasting month of Ramadan with a mass prayer at Jakarta's grand mosque on Saturday, with plateauing coronavirus cases allowing for eased restrictions this year. Thousands gathered after dusk at Istiqlal mosque in the Indonesian capital to join the Tarawih prayer, special prayers performed only during the month of Ramadan, donning masks and using check-in apps to take part in the event. For the past two years Indonesia has grappled with one of the highest rates of COVID-19 in Asia, but this Ramadan, traditionally a time of community, reflection and prayer, cases have eased enough to allow for mass gatherings.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/indonesia-greets-ramadan-with-mass-prayer-covid-curbs-ease-2022-04-03/>

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Number of COVID patients in US hospitals reaches record low

COVID-19 hospitalization numbers have plunged to their lowest levels since the early days of the pandemic, offering a much needed break to health care workers and patients alike following the omicron surge. The number of patients hospitalized with the coronavirus has fallen more than 90% in more than two months, and some hospitals are going days without a single COVID-19 patient in the ICU for the first time since early 2020. The freed up beds are expected to help U.S. hospitals retain exhausted staff, treat non-COVID-19 patients more quickly and cut down on inflated costs. More family members can visit loved ones. And doctors hope to see a correction to the slide in pediatric visits, yearly checkups and cancer screenings.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-business-health-pandemics-norfolk-36714eb4a053fb658e4b58139f2dd9e3>

Meta no longer requiring COVID booster shots for staff in U.S. offices

Facebook-owner Meta is no longer requiring employees to have COVID-19 boosters to enter its offices in the United States, a company spokesperson said on Friday. The social media company previously said that all workers returning to the office would have to present proof of their booster jabs, while the company monitored the Omicron variant situation. "We updated our requirements in early March to align with CDC guidance, and now COVID-19 boosters are no longer required for entry, though strongly recommended. The primary vaccination requirement (1- or 2-shot series) remains in place," said Meta spokesperson Tracy Clayton.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/meta-no-longer-requiring-covid-booster-shots-staff-us-offices-2022-04-01/>

China's farmers face fertiliser crunch as COVID measures hamper deliveries

China's COVID-19 curbs are disrupting the supply of fertiliser to the country's northeastern bread basket just a month away from spring planting, threatening this year's corn and soybean crops if not resolved soon. Farmers typically have fertiliser prepared in early April before applying to fields later in the month during planting. But China's worst outbreak of COVID since the pandemic began two years ago have triggered strict controls on movement of people and goods, sharply slowing deliveries. Fertiliser producers, dealers, analysts and associations said rules requiring truck drivers to take COVID tests every 24 hours, a need to obtain special passes to deliver goods and factory suspensions due to local COVID cases are all contributing to tight supplies.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-farmers-face-fertiliser-crunch-covid-measures-hamper-deliveries-2022-04-01/>

Shanghai COVID curbs prompt half of U.S. firms in China to cut revenue forecasts - survey

More than half of U.S. multinational companies in China have reduced their annual revenue projections, mostly due to the recent COVID-19 outbreak in Shanghai, according to a joint survey by the American Chambers of Commerce in Shanghai and Beijing published on Friday. Responses to the survey, conducted with 167 companies operating throughout China including 76 in manufacturing, found 82% of manufacturers reported slowed or reduced production due to a lack of employees, inability to obtain supplies, or government-ordered lockdowns. More than half, or 54%, have cut 2022 revenue projections following the outbreak, though 38% said it was too early to estimate the impact.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/shanghai-covid-curbs-prompt-half-us-firms-cut-revenue-forecasts-survey-2022-04-01/>

U.S. to end COVID order blocking asylum seekers at border with Mexico

The United States will end a sweeping, pandemic-related expulsion policy that has effectively closed down the U.S. asylum system at the border with Mexico, U.S. health officials said on Friday, arguing it was no longer needed to protect public health. The Title 42 order will remain in effect until May 23 to allow border officials time to prepare for its termination and to ramp up COVID-19 vaccines for arriving migrants, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said in a 30-page order.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-end-covid-order-blocking-asylum-seekers-border-2022-04-01/>

COVID weighing less and less on the U.S. job market

The coronavirus pandemic's grip on the U.S. job market notably loosened in March, two years after a state of emergency was declared, as the number of people homebound by COVID-19 concerns hit a new low and fewer people reported having to work remotely. In all, the government's benchmark monthly nonfarm payrolls report out Friday showed that by several metrics - including the total number of unemployed dropping below 6 million and a 3.6% unemployment rate - the U.S. job market had all but recovered from the devastating hit delivered in the first two months of the pandemic when 22 million people were thrown out of work

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/covid-weighting-less-less-us-job-market-2022-04-01/>

Hong Kong residents return home as Covid travel curbs eased; 5,823 cases logged

Thousands of residents started travelling back to Hong Kong and holidaymakers raced to book flights to faraway destinations on Friday after authorities eased some of the city's tough Covid-19 travel curbs, while health officials recorded 5,823 new infections. From Friday, the compulsory quarantine period for those arriving in Hong Kong was halved to seven days. The government also lifted a flight ban imposed on January 8 on Australia, Canada, France, India, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Britain and the United States. Announcing the easing of restrictions on Thursday, Chief Executive Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor said more than 2,000 Hong Kong residents stranded overseas were also expected to return on Friday. This also meant thousands of foreign domestic helpers stranded in the Philippines could return to the city, with employment agencies expecting to clear the backlog in the next two months.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/hong-kong-economy/article/3172643/hong-kong-residents-plan-first-holiday-trips-2>

Partisan Exits

Man in Germany Gets 90 Covid Shots to Sell Forged Passes

A 60-year-old man allegedly had himself vaccinated against COVID-19 dozens of times in Germany

in order to sell forged vaccination cards with real vaccine batch numbers to people not wanting to get vaccinated themselves. The man from the eastern Germany city of Magdeburg, whose name was not released in line with German privacy rules, is said to have received up to 90 shots against COVID-19 at vaccination centers in the eastern state of Saxony for months until criminal police caught him this month, the German news agency dpa reported Sunday. The suspect was not detained but is under investigation for unauthorized issuance of vaccination cards and document forgery, dpa reported.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-03/man-in-germany-gets-90-covid-19-shots-to-sell-forged-passes>

Shanghai separates COVID-positive children from parents in virus fight

Esther Zhao thought she was doing the right thing when she brought her 2-1/2-year-old daughter to a Shanghai hospital with a fever on March 26. Three days later, Zhao was begging health authorities not to separate them after she and the little girl both tested positive for COVID-19, saying her daughter was too young to be taken away to a quarantine centre for children. Doctors then threatened Zhao that her daughter would be left at the hospital, while she was sent to the centre, if she did not agree to transfer the girl to the Shanghai Public Health Clinical Center in the city's Jinshan district.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-separates-covid-positive-children-parents-virus-fight-2022-04-02/>

China's state media tries to rally support for zero-Covid as discontent grows

Chinese state media has sought to defend Beijing's zero-Covid strategy - which has become a part of Xi Jinping's political legacy - using the president's "persistence is victory" phrase to encourage people to stay the course. Authorities are under pressure over the tough policy as China battles its worst wave of infections since Wuhan in 2020, driven by the highly transmissible Omicron variant, with millions of people in lockdown while much of the rest of the world is reopening. Health officials on Friday said more than 100,000 locally transmitted cases were reported in mainland China in March.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3172827/chinese-state-media-tries-rally-support-zero-covid-discontent>

New York Judge Tosses Mask Requirement for Young Children

New York City's requirement that young children wear masks in daycare and prekindergarten settings will continue after an appellate judge stayed a lower-court ruling that threw out the so-called toddler mask mandate. Judge Paul Wooten granted the stay after a Friday evening hearing. New York Mayor Eric Adams and city health officials said earlier Friday that they hoped to keep the requirement as the daily number of coronavirus infections in the city increased.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-judge-tosses-mask-requirement-for-young-children-11648845836>

Continued Lockdown

'Man-made disaster': Shanghai struggles with COVID-19 lockdown

Brad Zhang emerged from a 3-week hotel quarantine in Shanghai to find that the financial hub had ground to a halt in the midst of China's biggest COVID-19 lockdown since the pandemic began. China's commercial capital Shanghai went into a two-stage lockdown this week that split the vast city along the Huangpu river, which divides its historic center from the eastern Pudong financial district.

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Coronavirus/Man-made-disaster-Shanghai-struggles-with-COVID-19-lockdown>

Scientific Viewpoint

Two Chinese mRNA Covid Vaccines Move Toward Clinical Trials

A Chinese company said it's received approval to start clinical trials of a Covid-19 vaccine based on mRNA technology, while local media reported that another domestic company has applied to start a

similar trial. CSPC Pharmaceutical Group Ltd. has been approved by China's medical product regulator to begin a trial of an COVID-19 vaccine named "SYS6006," it said in a statement to the Hong Kong stock exchange. The company said pre-clinical studies demonstrated the vaccine can help neutralize against the omicron variant of coronavirus. It does not need to be stored at below-freezing temperatures, the company said. China has inoculated the majority of its population using domestically-made coronavirus vaccines based on older inactivated virus technology, but authorities have not approved any based on mRNA outside the cities of Hong Kong and Macau.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-03/two-chinese-mrna-covid-vaccines-move-toward-clinical-trials>

'Eventually everyone may need Covid booster doses'

How prepared was NIV to handle the pandemic when it started two years ago? No one can be prepared for a pandemic of this nature, but I must give it to my team that rose to the occasion, working literally 24x7 for months on end to manage the crisis. Our preparedness can be gauged by the fact that India was the fifth country in the world to isolate Sars-Cov-2 virus, and first country to isolate the Alpha variant.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/eventually-everyone-may-need-covid-booster-doses-101648835643614.html>

Covid experts call for return of free tests as UK cases hit new high

Covid has hit an all-time high across the UK, with almost 5 million people – one in 13 of the population – estimated to have the virus, according to the most recent official data, prompting experts to call for the return of free testing. The figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) came on the day the government ended free rapid tests for most people in England and as tens of thousands of people were hoping to embark on Easter holidays. Many will have to pay for a test to find out if they are infected, whether they are symptomatic or not. While UK hospitalisations and deaths are also rising, these are not in line with the spike in infections, and scientists said they expect levels to fall sharply again in April and May.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/01/covid-infections-at-all-time-high-in-england-ONS-data-reveals>

Vaccination after COVID improves immunity; ivermectin fails in major trial

Vaccination after COVID-19 improves immunity. Although people who recover from COVID-19 usually gain some immune defenses against reinfection, they get additional protection from vaccines, especially against severe disease, according to two studies published on Thursday in The Lancet Infectious Diseases.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/vaccination-after-covid-improves-immunity-ivermectin-fails-major-trial-2022-04-01/>

Coronavirus Resurgence

UK's Covid infections hit record high as free tests end

Rates of Covid infection have hit a record high in the UK, official data showed today, just as free government testing ended for millions in England. Some 4.9 million people in the UK are estimated to have had Covid-19 in the week ending 26 March, or 600,000 more than the previous week, the latest survey by the Office for National Statistics said. It said one in 13 people in England are estimated to have had Covid during that week, up from one in 16 the week before. The rate in Scotland was higher still, at one in 12.

<https://www.rte.ie/news/uk/2022/0401/1289846-record-covid-infections/>

Covid infection levels hit record high in the UK

Covid infection levels have hit a record high ... England comes to an end. Some 4.9 million people in the UK are estimated to have had Covid-19 in the week ending March 26, up from 4.3 million in the previous week, the Office for National Statistics said ...

<https://uk.style.yahoo.com/covid-infection-levels-hit-record-113217745.html>

Covid infection rates are now at their highest ever level in Wales

Coronavirus infection rates have now reached their highest levels on record in Wales, new data from the Office for National Statistics has revealed. Their latest weekly bulletin, published on April 1, showed that an estimated 212,000 people had the virus in Wales in the week ending March 26. That equates to 6.97% of the population or around one in 14 people. This tops the previous record of 6.35%, which was recorded the week before, and the January 2022 peak of 5.56% when Omicron first swept the nation. However infection rates are thought to be even higher in some other parts of the UK. In England the ONS estimates that 4,122,700 people had Covid-19 in the week ending March 26, which equates to 7.56% of the population or around one in 13 people. In Scotland as many as one in 12 people are thought to have the virus over the same period while in Northern Ireland it's one in 15.

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/health/covid-infection-rates-now-highest-23571289>

COVID-19: Record 4.9 million people in UK had coronavirus in week to 26 March, ONS says

A record number of people in the UK are estimated to have COVID-19 in the week leading up to 26 March, data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows. It said that 4.9 million people in the UK are estimated to have had the virus, up from 4.3 million in the previous week. In England, around one in 13 people were likely to test positive for COVID last week, or 4.1 million people - up from one in 16, or 3.5 million people, in the week to 19 March. Both England and Wales are now recording record infection levels. The latest data also shows that the percentage of people testing positive for COVID-19 has continued to increase across all regions of England.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-record-4-9-million-people-in-uk-had-coronavirus-in-week-to-26-march-ons-says-12579508>

Shanghai Battles Covid-19 Outbreaks in Another Elderly-Care Hospital

At least two major elderly-care facilities in Shanghai are battling Covid-19 outbreaks, highlighting the threat posed to the city's large senior population from a wave of infections with the Omicron variant. Over the past week, Shanghai Tongkang Hospital, with more than 1,000 patients, has been quarantining a group of Covid-infected patients and medical workers in a designated building, according to relatives of some of the patients. On Thursday, the Journal reported that at least 100 patients had tested positive for Covid-19 and many patients died at Donghai Elderly Care Hospital, the city's biggest elderly-care facility by capacity, according to orderlies brought in recently to fill in for workers sent away to quarantine and other people familiar with the situation. Shanghai's government hasn't reported any Covid outbreak at either Donghai Hospital or Tongkang Hospital. Nor has it reported any Covid-related death at any of its hundreds of elderly-care centers.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/shanghai-battles-covid-19-outbreaks-in-another-elderly-care-hospital-11648840098>

England's COVID-19 prevalence hits record high - ONS

The prevalence of COVID-19 among people in England rose to its highest since the pandemic began in 2020, data from Britain's Office for National Statistics showed on Friday. One 1 in 13 people were believed to have the coronavirus in the week ending March 26, the fourth consecutive increase and higher than 1 in 16 recorded in the previous week. The ONS estimated 4.1 million people in England had COVID-19. The reading came on the day that free testing for COVID-19 ended for the general public. A self-test kit costs now typically around 2 pounds (\$2.63), while a PCR test at a lab could cost between 40 and 90 pounds.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/englands-covid-19-prevalence-hits-record-high-ons-2022-04-01/>

Records: 28,379 new Covid cases, 92 more deaths

There were 92 Covid-19 fatalities, the highest so far in the latest wave, and an all-time high of

28,379 cases during the previous 24 hours, the Public Health Ministry reported on Friday. This compared with the 85 coronavirus-related fatalities and 27,560 new cases reported on Thursday. The figures did not include 22,331 positive results from antigen tests over the past 24 hours. This would raise the total to 50,710 (up from 43,639 the previous day).

<https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2288770/records-28-379-new-covid-cases-92-more-deaths>

Why Are Covid Case Rates So High Yet Again?

Covid cases have started to climb once again, with more than half a million people testing positive over the last week. This works out to roughly one in 11 people in Scotland, one in 16 people in England and Wales and one in 17 people in Northern Ireland. Although still a long way off the record number of cases seen only in January this year, the current rates are still among the highest seen throughout the pandemic, and are particularly affecting school children and hospital staff. Yet, self-isolation rules for positive cases were dropped last month and travel rules have been completely relaxed for UK arrivals as the government pushes its living with Covid agenda. What's behind this latest spike and just how worried should we be?

https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/covid-case-rates-high-explained_uk_624303c3e4b0d7ac3d51f81a