

# Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

## 18th Aug 2021

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### Isolation Tips

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#### **Covid-19: Hong Kong to halt shorter quarantine for those tested with antibodies, as new rules trigger travel plan chaos**

Hong Kong will no longer allow incoming travellers who test positive for Covid-19 antibodies to undergo a shorter compulsory quarantine, Chief Executive Carrie Lam said on Tuesday. Following the advice of a scientific committee under the Centre for Health Protection (CHP), fully vaccinated travellers entering Hong Kong from “medium-risk” and “low-risk” areas who test positive for antibodies will have to undergo at least 14 days of quarantine, said Lam.

<https://hongkongfp.com/2021/08/17/covid-19-hong-kong-to-halt-shorter-quarantine-for-those-tested-with-antibodies-a-s-new-rules-trigger-travel-plan-chaos/>

#### **Japan to extend COVID-19 emergency lockdown**

Japan was set on Tuesday to extend its state of emergency in Tokyo and other regions to Sept. 12 and widen curbs to seven more prefectures, as COVID-19 cases spike in the capital and nationwide, burdening the medical system.

<https://www.reuters.com/video/watch/idRCV00A3VU>

#### **Over-60s struggle with loneliness during lockdowns, research finds**

Coping with loneliness during lockdowns was the greatest challenge many over-60s dealt with, new research has found. Many older people said the longer the period of loneliness, the harder the experience, and the more sorrow expressed at being forced to adjust to the restrictions. Many described how as time passed, they felt less connection to the wider community and were more likely to report feelings of fear. The findings emerged from a report compiled by researchers at the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (Tilda) at Trinity College Dublin.

<https://www.irishnews.com/news/republicofirelandnews/2021/08/17/news/over-60s-struggle-with-loneliness-during-lockdowns-research-finds-2420612/>

### Hygiene Helpers

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#### **Snap national lockdown in New Zealand over single virus case**

New Zealand’s government has taken drastic action by putting the entire nation into a strict lockdown for at least three days after finding a single case of coronavirus infection. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern on Tuesday invoked some of the stirring rhetoric she used early in the pandemic by urging the “team of five million” – New Zealand’s population – to go hard and early in trying to eliminate the latest outbreak.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/17/snap-national-lockdown-in-new-zealand-over-single-virus-case>

#### **DA won't prosecute for governor's student mask opt-out order**

An order by the Tennessee governor letting parents opt their children out of following mask rules at school has drawn defiance from officials in Memphis and Nashville, including a pledge Tuesday from Nashville’s district attorney not to prosecute teachers and school officials for flouting the carveout during the COVID-19 pandemic. Not long after Republican Gov. Bill Lee’s directive came down Monday, officials with Metro Nashville Public Schools and Shelby County Schools in the Memphis area pledged to keep enforcing their school mask requirements for students and others just as they have been. The resistance in the face of rising COVID-19 cases coincides with fights in states like

Florida, where some districts are requiring masks despite a ban by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis.  
<https://apnews.com/article/health-religion-education-coronavirus-pandemic-331aa948385868051f1a6b79d3d629c9>

### **West Virginia University requiring masks indoors**

West Virginia University is requiring masks to be worn in classrooms and labs for the next 30 days, saying not enough students and employees have submitted proof of vaccination against the coronavirus

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/latest-sources-us-recommend-vaccine-boosters-79496809>

### **‘Masks work’: experts on how to navigate Delta when you’re vaccinated**

The Covid-19 vaccine was supposed to bring life back to normal. Then came the Delta variant. Real-world data collection continues, but it’s clear that the vaccines do offer significant protection against becoming infected by Delta. They offer even greater protection against severe illness: Among states that are reporting breakthrough cases of Covid-19, fully vaccinated people made up no more than 5% of overall hospitalizations.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/aug/17/vaccines-delta-covid-coronavirus-safety-questions>

### **Vaccinate Kids Under 12 to Protect Us All From COVID-19**

It’s easy to argue for vaccinating adults and teenagers against COVID-19. Some think it’s harder to make the case for kids under 12 years of age, and for understandable reasons. Much of the world remains unvaccinated, kids have generally been much less affected by the coronavirus, and we don’t yet have a thorough understanding of the risks versus the benefits. Still, if we weigh all the pros and cons, the argument for immunizing young children is much stronger than the argument against.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/08/vaccinate-kids-under-12-delta-covid/619752/>

### **Among France’s poorest, once-lagging vaccine rates jump**

The poorest region in mainland France has managed to dramatically speed up its COVID-19 vaccination campaign in recent weeks, notably by opening walk-in pop-up centers to reach out to people where they live and work. The multicultural, working-class region of Seine-Saint-Denis, north of Paris, initially struggled in getting the word out about vaccines to a population where many are immigrants who don’t speak French or lack access to regular medical care. But offering vaccinations at a highly visible location with easy access seems to be doing the trick.

<https://apnews.com/article/europe-health-france-immigration-migration-608b50ade0bdfda242c1fe897f56397d>

### **India COVID vaccinations near record, new cases at five-month low**

India has administered more than 8.8 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines in the past 24 hours, government data shows, close to its all-time record and speeding up a campaign to inoculate all eligible adults by December. The surge in inoculations came alongside a sharp decline in daily new infections that fell to 25,166, the lowest since March 16, the health ministry said on Tuesday.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/17/india-covid-vaccinations-record-new-cases-five-month-low>

### **Amid new virus surge, Florida skeptics reconsider vaccines**

In a rural stretch of northeastern Florida where barely half the people have gotten a coronavirus shot, Roger West had no problem telling others he was “adamantly anti-vaccination.” The co-owner of the Westside Journal weekly newspaper used his voice as a columnist to widely share his doubts about the vaccine and his mistrust of the health experts in the U.S. who have been urging everyone to get it. “I do not trust the Federal Government,” West wrote recently. “I do not trust Dr. Fauci, I do not trust the medical profession, nor the pharmaceutical giants.” But something happened to change his mind: Two of West’s close friends became ill with the virus, and a third died. Rattled and stressed, he prayed for guidance. Then, when his mother and another relative both urged him to get vaccinated, he took it as a sign from God. West drove to the Winn Dixie supermarket and rolled up

his sleeve for the first of two injections of the Moderna vaccine.

<https://apnews.com/article/health-religion-florida-coronavirus-pandemic-7d2010935c177ccf5b479bf372553604>

## **Community Activities**

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### **What's safe to do during summer's Covid surge? STAT asked public health experts about their own plans**

With Covid-19 cases and hospitalizations spiking around the country, dreams of a summer like those many of us had in mind just a short time ago have faded. The fully vaccinated have been told to resume wearing masks indoors. Companies and institutions are leveling vaccine mandates. And some municipalities are requiring people to show proof of vaccination to get into restaurants, bars, and gyms. Confusion abounds about what is safe to do. (For the unvaccinated, there's no confusion about what's most important to do: Get immunized.)

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/08/17/whats-safe-to-do-during-summers-covid-surge-stat-asked-public-health-experts-about-their-own-plans/>

### **Federal agents seize thousands of fake covid vaccination cards destined for locations across U.S.**

Bundles of counterfeit coronavirus vaccination cards printed with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention logo have been shipped from Shenzhen, China, to recipients all around the United States, as some unvaccinated people try to evade restrictions that require proof of the shot to enter certain bars, schools and public spaces. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials said in a Friday statement that agents have seized thousands of fake vaccination cards passing through Memphis, a shipping hub.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/08/16/border-patrol-fake-vaccine-cards/>

### **Singapore prepares for long term life - and death - with COVID-19**

With just a few dozen COVID-19 deaths and one of the world's highest vaccination rates, Singapore wants to reopen for business - and is laying the groundwork to live with the coronavirus as it does other common diseases such as influenza.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/singapore-prepares-long-term-life-death-with-covid-19-2021-08-17/>

## **Working Remotely**

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### **Big Tech wants its workers back in the office**

In the midst of a truly disruptive global trend, the world's greatest disrupters are clinging on to tradition. Companies like Google may have delayed office reopenings but they have not given up completely. This conservatism contrasts with radical changes elsewhere in the sector. In May, cryptocurrency exchange Coinbase declared that it would close its San Francisco headquarters for good. In-person gatherings would be arranged for collaboration but day-to-day work would be remote. "If we had let our office-based inertia carry us into the future of work, we'd still be where we were almost a year ago," wrote Dominique Baillet, head of employee experience. Tech workers, like a lot of employees, do not want to go back to the office full time. Being evaluated on work rather than presenteeism is popular.

<https://www.ft.com/content/83804182-8d28-431a-b722-9b8889adff00>

### **Cutting pay for remote workers is a risky move**

The pandemic created a tempting opportunity for many urban workers who found themselves working from home: to move somewhere cheaper and take their big city salaries with them. There were hopes this could rebalance our economies too, by allowing good jobs to spread out of expensive and overcrowded cities into areas that could use the boost. But as employers begin to adjust their policies to a post-pandemic world, there is a possibility the dream will evaporate. If you move to cut your living expenses, your employer might cut your pay. Google staff who decide to

work from home permanently after the pandemic will have their pay determined by their location, Reuters reported last week.

<https://www.ft.com/content/a37150e3-7480-4181-90e4-1ce9dc5d1d39>

### **They'd rather quit than end the remote working dream**

Not a day goes by without another company announcing a delay in its return to the office. Chevron, Facebook, McDonald's, even JP Morgan have all pushed back their plans to later this year or even 2022. But pressing pause may only postpone the fallout from employees who have grown used to the perks of remote work. "I get to spend much more time with my family, at least three hours more every day," says 43-year-old SEO manager Christian Hänsel, who quit his job in June to steer clear of the office. "To get to my last job, I'd have to drive an hour every day, which is not much but it was an hour that I couldn't spend with my family." To avoid that commute, Hänsel found a new role at a remote-only business. Now, a job ad for his old position is online. "They wrote in the job offer '100 per cent remote'," he says, "but you have to live within a range of 100 kilometres."

<https://www.wired.co.uk/article/quit-remote-working-dream>

## **Virtual Classrooms**

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### **COVID: S. Carolina school district back to virtual classes**

COVID-19 cases have prompted the largest South Carolina school district already back open to return to virtual lessons as students in more than 60 other districts prepared to return to class. Pickens County school officials made the decision at an emergency meeting Friday, after nine days of in-class learning for the system's 15,000-plus students, the Greenville News reported. "We don't know if it's safe to continue as is," and other districts should pay attention, district spokesman Darian Byrd said during the meeting.

<https://apnews.com/article/business-health-education-coronavirus-pandemic-eedc8bd21e55ea0eb190902e5a3fa457>

## **Public Policies**

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### **U.S. to world leaders: Stop U.N. becoming COVID 'super-spreader'**

The United States is urging world leaders to send videos instead of traveling to New York next month for an annual high-level gathering at the United Nations, saying it would help prevent it "from being a super-spreader event" amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting of world leaders for the 76th U.N. General Assembly, starting Sept. 21, is shaping up to be a hybrid event of in-person speeches and video statements as global vaccination rates vary and the spread of COVID-19 variants sparks concern.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us-world-leaders-stop-un-becoming-covid-super-spreader-2021-08-17/>

### **US to recommend booster jabs for all as Delta variant rises**

United States health authorities are expected to recommend an extra dose of COVID-19 vaccine for all Americans as the Delta variant of the virus spreads quickly across the country. Health officials in US President Joe Biden's administration will recommend that most people should get a booster shot eight months after they completed their initial vaccination, a source familiar with the decision told the Reuters news agency.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/17/delta-variant-infections-rise-in-us-as-cdc-to-recommend-boosters>

### **Coronavirus vaccine will soon be mandatory: Presidential adviser**

The Egyptian state will ensure that vaccinations against the coronavirus will be mandatory soon, advisor to the President of the Republic for Health Affairs, Mohamed Awad Tag Eddin announced. After a short period, vaccination will be compulsory and not optional in all government and private institutions, he said. He added that there is now much less hesitancy amongst civilians in getting the vaccine, with requests rising daily.

<https://www.egyptindependent.com/coronavirus-vaccine-will-soon-be-mandatory-presidential-adviser/>

### **COVID-19: UK regulator approves Moderna coronavirus vaccine for 12 to 17-year-olds**

The UK health regulator has approved the Moderna coronavirus vaccine for 12 to 17-year-olds. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) said it is now up to the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) to advise the government on whether children in this age group should be given the jab. The MHRA said that the jab - also known as the Spikevax vaccine - is "safe and effective in this age group".

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-uk-regulator-approves-moderna-coronavirus-vaccine-for-12-to-17-year-olds-12383760>

### **WHO concerned about COVID-19 in Afghanistan as jabs slow**

The World Health Organization (WHO) is worried about the spread of the coronavirus in Afghanistan as the upheaval caused by the Taliban advance and seizure of power has slowed vaccinations, a spokesperson said on Tuesday.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/who-concerned-about-covid-19-afghanistan-jabs-slow-2021-08-17/>

### **More than 30 'emergency' Covid-19 measures could become permanent in Scotland**

Announcing a consultation on the possibility of some "beneficial temporary measures" with the emergency powers granted to the Scottish Government during the Covid-19 pandemic, deputy first minister John Swinney said "innovative, beneficial" measures could be retained. But the move was criticised by the Scottish Conservatives as a "clear sign" the SNP was "unwilling to give up their control over people's lives", while Scottish Labour urged scrutiny around the new powers.

<https://www.scotsman.com/health/coronavirus/more-than-30-emergency-covid-19-measures-could-become-permanent-in-scotland-3348968>

### **Biden administration is all in on COVID boosters, and follow-up vaccinations could begin next month: reports**

On a day when Pfizer and BioNTech revealed that they were submitting COVID-19 booster-shot data to the FDA, the government looks to be a step ahead in the process. The Biden administration has decided to recommend booster shots for most Americans, multiple news outlets report. The endorsement could come as early as this week, said The New York Times, citing administration officials, who added that boosters could be made available as early as mid-September. CDC vaccine advisors will meet on Aug. 24 for "discussions on additional doses of COVID-19 vaccine, including booster doses," the agency revealed in a filing.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/biden-administration-all-covid-19-boosters-reports-say-even-getting-ahead-regulatory-process>

## **Maintaining Services**

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### **South African activists slam J&J for exporting vaccines**

Health activists in Africa have slammed Johnson & Johnson for exporting vaccines produced in South Africa to countries in Europe, which have already immunized large numbers of their people and have even donated vaccines to more needy countries. The one-dose J&J vaccines were exported from South Africa, where they had been assembled, despite the pressing need for vaccines across Africa, where less than 3% of the continent's 1.3 billion people have been fully vaccinated.

<https://apnews.com/article/europe-africa-business-health-coronavirus-pandemic-9996bb1487e1197580070eaa44f3f420>

### **Ontario to offer third COVID-19 vaccine doses to high-risk people**

The Canadian province of Ontario will begin offering third COVID-19 vaccine doses to vulnerable people as early as this week, its chief medical officer said on Tuesday. Eligible populations will include transplant patients, along with residents in high-risk settings, including long-term care homes and indigenous elder care lodges.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/ontario-offer-third-covid-19-vaccine-doses-high-risk-people-2021-08-17/>

### **Cuba struggles to get oxygen to the sick, vaccines to the healthy**

Cuba has turned to the military to provide oxygen amid a surge of the coronavirus even as doctors rush to administer locally developed vaccines to the population. The government announced on Sunday that the Caribbean island's main oxygen plant had broken down in the midst of a Delta variant-driven coronavirus surge that has resulted in record numbers of cases and deaths, swamping some provincial health systems.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/cuba-struggles-get-oxygen-sick-vaccines-healthy-2021-08-17/>

## **Healthcare Innovations**

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### **No evidence Covid vaccines can raise the risk of miscarriage or affect fertility, drug watchdog insists**

No evidence Covid vaccines raise miscarriage or stillbirth risk, MHRA says. There are also no signals that the jabs affect people's ability to have children. Around 55,000 pregnant women in the UK have been vaccinated

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9900413/No-evidence-Covid-jabs-raise-miscarriage-risk-MHRA-says.html>

### **Higher risk of Bell's Palsy after Sinovac's COVID-19 vaccine - study**

The risk of Bell's Palsy, a type of facial paralysis, is higher after Sinovac Biotech Ltd's COVID-19 vaccine CoronaVac, but should not be a deterrent to vaccination, according to a study published in The Lancet Infectious Diseases journal.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/higher-risk-bells-palsy-after-sinovacs-covid-19-vaccine-study-2021-08-17/>

### **Post Covid-19, patient input may play a greater role in drug development**

A lasting memorial may be emerging for the millions of people who will have tragically died of Covid-19 by the time the pandemic ends: the demonstration that breakthroughs can happen fast when drug companies and regulators listen to and communicate openly with patients. The concept of patient engagement across the health care ecosystem emerged more than a decade ago. Its core idea — incorporating patients' actual experiences, perspectives, needs, and priorities into treatment efforts and drug-development decisions rather than taking them for granted — started a fundamental change of thinking in the drug development world.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/08/17/listening-to-patients-could-be-a-powerful-pandemic-legacy/>

### **Football with few fans not tied to county COVID spread**

"We surmise that the NFL and NCAA policies regarding limited in-person attendance, mask use, and social and physical distancing measures in stadiums was not associated with substantially higher community spread of COVID-19," the study authors wrote. "Additionally, an important number of NFL and NCAA football stadiums are outdoors or have a retractable roof, which could have had an impact on mitigating spread." The authors say the study results may help sports leagues decide how to best proceed with future games, although research into potential coronavirus spread to adjacent counties is needed. "Our study provides evidence suggesting that in-person attendance of football games with social distancing and mask use could be resumed in the 2021 to 2022 season," they wrote. "However, it is worth noting that newly emerging variants of SARS-CoV-2 have less predictable implications at this point and might lead to more disruptive interruptions in the future.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/08/football-few-fans-not-tied-county-covid-spread>

### **Vaccine firms working on combined Covid-19 and flu jab which could protect against both viruses in one dose**

A new vaccines mega-factory could make a combined jab for Covid-19 and flu to be given to vulnerable Britons on a regular basis in the future, according to its boss. The Vaccine Manufacturing

and Innovation Centre (VMIC) in Oxfordshire is due to open later this year and will start making doses to be used in a “revaccination campaign” if needed from 2022. Its chief executive, Matthew Duchars, said one project manufacturers were working on would see the vaccines against coronavirus and influenza combined in a single injection.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/vaccine-firms-combined-covid-19-flu-jab-one-dose-1153325>