

Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

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Isolation Tips

Melbourne set for COVID lockdown exit despite record cases as vaccinations spike

Melbourne will exit months of COVID-19 lockdown next week helped by a faster-than-expected vaccine uptake, Victoria state Premier Daniel Andrews said on Thursday, ahead of schedule even though daily infections hit a record the same day. In the worst day of an outbreak of the Delta variant coronavirus that began in early August, Victoria logged 2,297 new cases on Thursday, up from 1,571 the day before and the highest for any Australian state or territory since the pandemic began. Eleven people died, bringing the total toll in the latest outbreak to 125.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/covid-19-cases-australias-victoria-hit-record-daily-high-2021-10-13/>

Hygiene Helpers

What's the latest advice on the type of mask I should wear?

What's the latest advice on the type of mask I should wear? It depends on your situation, but health officials say it should cover your nose and mouth, and fit snugly so there aren't any gaps on the sides of your face. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also says to pick masks with two or more layers and a nose wire to prevent air from leaking out the top. It suggests holding your mask up to check if it blocks light, which means the fabric will probably filter out more particles. If you want added protection, experts also suggest wearing two masks or pairing them with a mask fitter to ensure they don't leave any gaps.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-lifestyle-health-0033db2d289338e726d80ad4e4f7d750>

COMMENTARY: What can masks do? Part 1: The science behind COVID-19 protection

Confusion continues to abound over the effectiveness of masks to protect people from COVID-19, and recent news stories touting imperfect studies are only compounding the situation. First, there was confusion and then intransigence about the modes of transmission, with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) insisting for many months after SARS-CoV-2 emerged that the virus was transmitted only by large droplets or hand contact. Only fairly recently did those agencies finally recognize that inhalation of small infectious particles in the air ("aerosols") is a more important mode of transmission. That was followed by substantial misinformation and misunderstanding about the role of cloth face coverings, surgical masks, and respirators in preventing SARS-CoV-2 spread. Then we had misunderstandings and poor messaging about the efficacy of different interventions, the effectiveness of one intervention versus another, and why interventions should be considered in a particular order or hierarchy.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/10/commentary-what-can-masks-do-part-1-science-behind-covid-19-protection>

How do you vaccinate a small African nation? Rwanda's health minister explains

An outlier in Africa's slow rollout, Rwanda has raced ahead and vaccinated more than 90 per cent of adults in its capital. Minister of Health Dr Daniel Ngamije tells the Evening Standard's Vaccine for the World project how Rwanda did it

<https://www.standard.co.uk/optimist/vaccine-world/how-did-rwanda-vaccinate-quickly-rwanda-daniel-ngamije-covid-b960485.html>

Covid vaccines for US children are coming but challenge will be persuading parents

Covid vaccines for children aged five to 11 are inching closer to authorization in the US, with possible availability as soon as early November, and experts are already looking to the next hurdle: actually getting the shots in those young arms. Only one-third of parents plan to vaccinate their children as soon as the vaccines are ready, the non-partisan Kaiser Family Foundation has found. Another third of those surveyed want to wait and see how the rollout goes. "What's going to be actually more challenging, beyond having the infrastructure to be able to administer the Covid-19 vaccines, is ensuring that parents feel comfortable vaccinating their children," Syra Madad, an infectious disease epidemiologist and senior director of the System-wide Special Pathogens Program at NYC Health + Hospitals, told the Guardian. About half of children 12 and older have been vaccinated in the months since the vaccines were given the green light for those ages.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/14/covid-vaccines-children-persuading-parents>

Australians can test themselves for Covid-19 at home in two weeks

Rapid antigen tests have been used extensively in countries around the world. They have finally been approved for use at home in Australia from November 1. States and territories will decide how residents can use the tests.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10090793/Australians-test-Covid-19-home-two-weeks.html>

Community Activities

Queensland cops take police to court over Covid vaccine mandates

Queensland Police have been told by their commissioner to get Covid vaccine. But 50 furious staff members are taking the fight to court and refuse to get vax. Dozens of officers have already been suspended after not getting vaccinated. Mandatory vaccination is becoming an increasingly controversial issue. In NSW, people must be double-jabbed just to go to shops or the pub.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10091293/Queensland-cops-police-court-Covid-vaccine-mandates.html>

Anti-vaxxers paying \$500 for fake Australian Covid vaccine passports that work to enter venues

More than a dozen accounts selling fake vaccine passports set up on Telegram. One website is offering counterfeit Australian government documents for \$500. Sources have told Daily Mail Australia they are aware of them working in Sydney. A woman said her colleague was using one to successfully enter businesses. The reports come as Victoria and ACT prepare to reopen as they hit job targets.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10089749/Anti-vaxxers-paying-500-fake-Australian-Covid-vaccine-passports-work-enter-venues.html>

U.S. pastors, advocacy groups mobilize against COVID-19 vaccine mandates

From the outside, First Harvest Ministries in Waveland, Mississippi, could almost be mistaken for a storage shed were it not for the steeple. From the modest building however, Shane Vaughn, the Pentecostal church's pastor, has helped spearhead an online movement promoting personal faith as a way around workplace COVID-19 vaccine mandates. He posts form letters for U.S. workers seeking religious exemptions that have been downloaded from his website around 40,000 times, according to a screen shot of web traffic he shared with Reuters.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-pastors-advocacy-groups-mobilize-against-covid-19-vaccine-mandates-2021-10-14/>

How to Deal With an Anti-Vaxxer at a Holiday Dinner

So at a holiday gathering, plan a collaborative activity, like a puzzle, or Legos, or prepping dinner. Then get people telling stories—about how they made big life decisions, about lessons from loved ones they never forgot. Personal stories, personal truths—that's how you coax out their values. You allow people to build bridges to their better selves. You'll return to those values to find common

ground and make your case. You persuade them by reminding them of the trust you've built and the values you share.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-10-14/how-to-talk-to-anti-vax-family-members-this-holiday?srnd=premium-europe>

Working Remotely

Remote Work Can Be Better for Innovation Than In-Person Meetings

Fear of losing their innovative edge pushes many leaders to reject hybrid and virtual work arrangements. Yet extensive research shows that hybrid and remote teams can gain an innovation advantage and outcompete in-person teams by adopting best practices for innovation, such as virtual brainstorming. What explains this discrepancy between leadership beliefs and scientific evidence? After interviewing 61 leaders on a strategic return back to the office, Gleb Tsipursky, a behavioral scientist, discovered the root of the problem: The vast majority of leaders tried to pursue innovation during the lockdowns by adapting their office-based approach of synchronous brainstorming to videoconference meetings. They found that videoconferences aren't well suited for traditional brainstorming and thus feel they need to go back to the office.

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/remote-work-can-be-better-for-innovation-than-in-person-meetings/>

Majority of employees comfortable asking their manager to work remotely, think tank finds

The majority of workers are happy to speak to their employer about remote and hybrid working, research has found, with experts advising firms to listen to their staff's needs. A poll of 1,000 UK workers, conducted by the Work Foundation and the Chartered Management Institute (CMI), found that the vast majority (88 per cent) wanted to continue working remotely at least one day a week. The research also found that, of the employees whose line managers were responsible for deciding their working arrangement going forward, three in five (59 per cent) said they were comfortable asking their manager to work remotely. A similar proportion (54 per cent) also indicated that their line manager's support was the main reason they were comfortable asking for remote working.

<https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/news/articles/majority-employees-comfortable-asking-their-manager-work-remotely-think-tank-finds>

The working from home debate is complex, so don't treat employees like children

The question of remote working is nuanced, with evidence for and against, and unique reasons why particular companies and individuals could benefit or suffer. We should acknowledge there's no one-size-fits-all answer. The reasons why people might or might not want to return to the office are legion, yet their voices are drowned out by so-called thought leaders shouting at the top of their lungs about what everyone else wants: a presumed aggregation of the personal preferences of those most vocal.

<https://www.marketingweek.com/jp-castlin-working-from-home/>

Virtual Classrooms

Can edtech deliver on its pandemic promise?

Education technology was adopted widely during the pandemic as schools around the world were forced to close and sought alternative ways to teach children. While sometimes overhyped in the past — much-vaunted interactive whiteboards were often left unused — edtech now has the potential to support education in lower-income countries. The benefits can be as much for policymakers and school leaders as for teachers and students in the classroom and beyond. For example, online management systems can be used to track attendance and test scores, provide lesson plans and help allocate resources. Self-learning tools for students include supplementary apps, test preparation and live lessons. But not everyone is convinced of the merits of edtech. A review for the United States Agency for International Development last year found that there was “a

lack of conclusive and robust research and study of distance-learning modalities, especially in the global south”.

<https://www.ft.com/content/02232970-c72e-4fef-aacc-6b3b010966df>

How does national culture affect the adoption of learning technology?

The uptake of learning technologies has been, in many cases, disappointing. University managers, educational technologists, educators and other practitioners are looking for ways to overcome this resistance and boost the use of learning management systems, also known as virtual learning environments, or VLEs. However, researchers have found factors that influence the adoption of learning technologies are not universal, and they differ from country to country. This research hopes to unpack the secret of users’ resistance from a cultural perspective – resistance that existed long before the pandemic – and offer advice to counteract it.

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/how-does-national-culture-affect-adoption-learning-technology>

Virtual Learning Expansion Sparks Both Hope and Skepticism

Since the D.C. Council’s unanimous passage of emergency legislation increasing virtual learning slots in District public and public charter schools, parents whose children had been denied that option must now consider taking advantage of the highly coveted opportunity. Even with a greater chance of approval, there’s some skepticism among parents about whether schools will approve their applications and allow their children to learn from within the safe confines of their home. The legislation, titled Protecting Our Children Emergency Declaration Resolution, applies to children who live with people posing a high risk of illness from a COVID-19 infection.

<https://www.washingtoninformer.com/virtual-learning-expansion-sparks-both-hope-and-skepticism/>

Public Policies

Moderna Booster Shot Backed by FDA Advisory Panel

Vaccine experts advising the Food and Drug Administration voted 19 to 0 Thursday to recommend authorization of an extra dose of Moderna Inc.’s mRNA 3.23% Covid-19 shot, a key step in making booster doses available to millions more people. A vaccine-advisory panel voted in favor of giving a Moderna booster shot at least six months after the second dose, to adults 65 years and older, as well as adults under 65 who are at high risk of severe Covid-19 or serious complications because of their jobs, living conditions or underlying medical conditions.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/fda-advisors-to-consider-moderna-covid-19-booster-shot-11634211532>

U.S. donates 17 million J&J doses to African Union

President Joe Biden told visiting Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta on Thursday that the United States will make a one-time donation of more than 17 million doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine to the African Union, the White House said. The meeting with Kenyatta at the White House marked Biden's first as president with an African leader. Kenya holds the rotating presidency of the U.N. Security Council this month. The United States and Kenya have long cooperated on economic and security initiatives including counterterrorism.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/us-donates-17-million-jj-doses-african-union-2021-10-14/>

France donates COVID-19 vaccine to Nigeria under COVAX scheme

Nigeria has received 501,600 doses of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine from the French government through the COVAX vaccine-sharing facility, a senior health official said on Thursday. Faisal Shuaib, head of the National Primary Health Care Development Agency, said the country also received 434,400 doses of Johnson and Johnson vaccine from the African Union. Both supplies were received last week, Shuaib said, adding that more were expected through the COVAX facility and the African Union.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/france-donates-covid-19-vaccine-nigeria-under-covax-scheme-2021-10-14/>

U.S. to ship 2.4 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine to Pakistan

The U.S. government will ship 2.4 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine to Pakistan on Thursday, bringing the total number of doses sent to the South Asian country to about 18.3 million, more than any other country, a White House official said. The latest shipments of the vaccine lots made by Pfizer and Germany's BioNTech are due to arrive on Saturday via the COVAX distribution program, said the official, who asked to remain unidentified.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/us-ship-24-million-doses-covid-19-vaccine-pakistan-2021-10-14/>

EU starts real-time review of AstraZeneca COVID-19 antibody cocktail

Europe's drug regulator said on Thursday it had started a real-time review of AstraZeneca's antibody-based COVID-19 therapy, the first protective shot other than vaccines against coronavirus. The decision by the human medicines committee of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) to begin the rolling review was based on early results from clinical studies, the regulator said. It did not say when a conclusion was expected. The move to start a real-time review, so called because data is evaluated as it is made available, came roughly a week after the Anglo-Swedish drugmaker sought emergency approval from U.S. authorities.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/eu-begins-real-time-review-astrazeneca-covid-19-antibody-cocktail-2021-10-14/>

Maintaining Services

Coronavirus: Unions call for improved vaccine rollout

A global coalition of more than 350 trade unions is renewing calls for politicians to waive the patents on Covid vaccines. They say that failing to do so would compound supply chain crises and inflict "economic self-harm". It comes as the World Trade Organization (WTO) tries to broker a compromise at a meeting in Geneva. Critics argue that accelerating the rollout of vaccines is more complex than just the waiving of patents. The dilemma being discussed at the WTO meeting centres on finding the best way to ensure the most widespread and equitable way of vaccinating the whole world from coronavirus and ending the pandemic. Successfully doing so would allow the removal of restrictions that have impaired economic growth.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-58906765>

Hungary will receive technology to produce Sputnik V COVID-19 vaccine -foreign minister

Hungary will receive technology this year to produce Russia's Sputnik V COVID-19 vaccine at a Hungarian plant currently under construction, Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said in Moscow on Thursday according to a foreign ministry statement. This would be the first concrete step towards making the vaccine in the European Union, even though it is not yet approved in the bloc. The Sputnik V vaccine, widely used in Russia and approved for use in more than 70 countries, is still undergoing a review by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the European Medicines Agency.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/hungary-will-this-year-receive-technology-produce-sputnik-v-covid-19-vaccine-2021-10-14/>

Covid-19: NHS facing exceptionally difficult winter - Chris Whitty

The NHS faces an "exceptionally difficult" winter whether there is a Covid surge or not, England's chief medical officer Prof Chris Whitty says. GPs in England are being told to see more patients face-to-face as ministers unveil a £250m winter rescue package. But the doctors' union says the package shows "a government out of touch with the scale of the crisis." The British Medical Association adds doctors will be "horrified" by the idea the plan will save them when it could "sink the ship altogether"

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/uk-58908381>

COVID-19 cases surge among children after schools reopen - but drop among adults

Coronavirus infections among children increased in England last month after schools reopened, a study has found. The surge kept overall cases high even as COVID-19's prevalence among adults fell, the research showed. The epidemic was estimated to be growing among those under 17, with an R number estimated at 1.18, according to the REACT-1 study led by Imperial College London.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-cases-surge-among-children-after-schools-reopen-but-drop-among-adults-12433304>

Healthcare Innovations

The hidden cost of Covid-19: years of life lost among the young

Body counts appear to support the common perception that Covid-19 does its worst damage among the old and vulnerable. But body counts mask another reality, and focusing on them is skewing policy decisions and individual choices. There's no question that deaths were most common among old and vulnerable individuals early in the pandemic. Some politicians and academics have used death rates to conclude that the pandemic's toll has been largely confined to the elderly and sick, and that widespread mitigation measures such as mask and vaccine mandates are unjustified. We looked at Covid-related deaths through a different lens — years of life lost — which revealed a very different picture about the burden of illness than deaths alone.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/10/14/years-of-life-lost-among-the-young-hidden-cost-covid-19/>