

Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

4th Aug 2022

Isolation Tips

Eastern Chinese export hub Yiwu imposes COVID restrictions, locks down some areas

The Chinese city of Yiwu in Zhejiang province has suspended some public gatherings and dining at restaurants, closed multiple entertainment venues and locked down some areas to cope with COVID-19 flare-ups, the city government said on Wednesday. In light of the latest COVID-19 infections, city-wide mass testing will be conducted on Aug. 4, Yiwu's health authorities said late on Wednesday. There were 38 new coronavirus cases in Yiwu since Tuesday, of which nine were symptomatic and 29 were asymptomatic, the city's health authorities said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/eastern-chinese-export-hub-yiwu-imposes-covid-restrictions-locks-down-some-areas-2022-08-03/>

Hygiene Helpers

Long COVID comes in three forms: study

New research from scientists from King's College London supports the idea that there are three different types of long COVID, each with their own symptoms. Researchers studied over 1,000 people suffering from post-COVID syndrome and found that there are three different subtypes of the condition. The first subtype consisted of respiratory symptoms, the second neurologic and third autoimmune.

<https://thehill.com/changing-america/well-being/prevention-cures/3586890-long-covid-comes-in-three-forms-study/>

Evidence that university and college vaccine mandates reduce community COVID-19 cases

A new study co-authored by Michigan State University economics professor Scott Imberman, Ph.D., and doctoral student Wenjia Cao, found that university vaccine mandates were effective in reducing new COVID-19 cases in communities. Their research, "The Effect of Vaccine Mandates on Disease Spread: Evidence from College COVID-19 Mandates," will be published by the National Bureau of Economic Research, and is the first of its kind to provide direct evidence of the positive impact university and college vaccine mandates have had on community health outcomes. "While there is evidence that vaccines improve health outcomes for individuals, our analysis showed that college- and university-imposed COVID-19 vaccine mandates also benefited the community beyond the campus," Dr. Imberman said.

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-08-evidence-university-college-vaccine-mandates.html>

Poland to offer fourth dose of Covid-19 vaccine to adults in September

Poland will allow a fourth dose of coronavirus vaccine to be received by people aged over 18 in September, the health minister has announced. Since July 22, a second booster dose has been available for people in the 60-70 age group and an additional vaccination for people aged over 12 years with immune deficiency. Before, the fourth dose has been offered to everybody over 80.

<https://www.thefirstnews.com/article/poland-to-offer-fourth-dose-of-covid-19-vaccine-to-adults-in-september-32156>

Germany announces new coronavirus measures for fall, winter

The German government on Wednesday said basic coronavirus requirements would remain in place during the coming fall and winter, when experts expect COVID-19 cases to rise again as people spend more time indoors. Face masks and presenting proof of a negative coronavirus test will be

mandatory from October until early April at hospitals, nursing homes and similar institutions with vulnerable people. Passengers on airplanes and making long-distance trips by train and bus also will have to wear masks during that period, as they do now.

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/germany-announces-coronavirus-measures-fall-winter-87871818>

How much do face masks protect you against COVID-19?

Health authorities no longer force people in Australia to wear face masks except in certain situations, but previous studies show how effective wearing a mask can be in stopping you from getting COVID-19. From around February this year, most states and territories gradually removed requirements for people to wear face masks except in limited circumstances. Current mandates vary slightly across jurisdictions but masks are generally still required while travelling on public transport and planes, and when in hospitals and aged care centres. The requirement for people to wear masks in airport terminals was removed after the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) said in June it was no longer appropriate. The decision whether or not to wear a mask in most public indoor spaces such as shopping centres and in offices is now down to individual choice.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/the-figures-that-shows-why-masks-still-matter-when-it-comes-to-covid-19/6hpl1u85i>

Tokyo is giving out free Covid-19 self-test kits

Article reports that with the current surge in Covid-19 infections across Japan, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government is now providing free rapid antigen self-test kits to those with Covid-19 symptoms. This new initiative is exclusive to Tokyoites in their 20s, born between August 2 1992 and August 1 2002.

<https://www.timeout.com/tokyo/news/tokyo-is-giving-out-free-covid-19-self-test-kits-to-residents-in-their-20s-080322>

The curious case of the Covid-19 rebound

If we've learned anything over the past two and a half years, it's that Covid-19 is one strange disease. The latest case in point: the coronavirus rebound. The condition grabbed international attention last week when US President Joe Biden tested positive for the virus six days after testing negative following his first bout of the illness. The White House said Biden, who is back in isolation, was experiencing a bit of a "loose cough" but did not have a fever and his lungs were "clear." The President tested positive again after being treated with the antiviral Paxlovid. White House officials had previously suggested a rebound case of Covid was unlikely, based on reports of cases around the country, but Biden's doctors continued to monitor his health and test him.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/03/world/coronavirus-newsletter-intl-08-03-22/index.html>

Paxlovid rebound happens, though why and to whom are still a mystery

As an emergency department physician in New York, I often field calls about medical issues from family members, friends, and even friends of friends. Since the Covid-19 pandemic began, the number of these calls has dramatically increased. The latest slew of these, about Paxlovid and rebound Covid-19 — which President Biden now apparently has — has revealed the confusion surrounding this phenomenon for me, my physician colleagues, and at least one Nobel laureate. I recently got a call from my friend Joachim Frank, who shared the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2017, about his rebound Covid after doing what he was supposed to do: taking Paxlovid as his doctor had prescribed.

<https://www.statnews.com/2022/08/02/paxlovid-rebound-mystery/>

Community Activities

Japan learns to live with COVID-19 as locals flock to travel spots

Japan's residents are flocking to tourism hot spots and snapping up normally hard-to-get restaurant reservations even as COVID-19 infections surge to a record, in a sign one of the slowest major

economies to fully reopen is adjusting to life with the virus. Domestic travel is booming as people enjoy their first restriction-free summer since 2019 and as still-tight border rules keep away the hordes of foreign visitors that typically crowd popular attractions. Most residents are shaking off concerns about the current wave of virus cases, with travel agencies H.I.S. and JTB reporting no obvious rise in cancellations. Nippon Travel Agency Co. says any spots that become available are quickly booked.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/08/03/national/domestic-tourism-rebound/>

Survey: A third of US kids had excessive screen time amid COVID

More than one third of US children used media addictively in fall 2020, a finding tied to family stressors but not a decrease in the number of screen-time rules implemented, finds a survey of US parents published today in Pediatrics. Investigators from Seattle Children's Research Institute surveyed 1,000 US parents who had at least one child aged 6 to 17 years to evaluate how COVID-19 pandemic-related family stressors and the number of screen-time rules affected their children's media use in October and November 2020. The sample included 500 parents each with children in the 6- to 10-year-old group and in the 11- to 17-year-old group. Parents completed the Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4) and the Problematic Media Use Scale and were asked about parental employment status, demographic characteristics, and whether their child attended school in person or remotely.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/08/survey-third-us-kids-had-excessive-screen-time-amid-covid>

Working Remotely

Remote work ate your vacation. 'The lines between work and life have become increasingly blurred'

A recent report from Qualtrics finds that roughly half of American employees said they work about one hour a day when on vacation. Most knowledge workers can work anywhere with a laptop and a wi-fi connection, and that's exactly what they're doing. But when does work stop? Since many of us stopped going to the office in March 2020, work has become an ever-present specter in our homes, and now even when we (try to) go on vacation. The truly unplugged vacation is becoming a thing of the past.

<https://fortune.com/2022/08/02/is-vacation-possible-with-remote-work-unlimited-time-off/>

Rise of remote working is creating diversity in tech

Latin America has recently become the new forefront for nearshore IT talent, as its industry has seen rapid development in the past five years. The silver lining of the global pandemic is the rapid acceleration of diversity in technology talent because companies of all sizes realize that it takes a global village of talent to meet market demands. As part of an initiative to make the tech industry in Latin America more inclusive, many countries are working hard to make sure that US companies have a diverse roster of talent to choose from.

<https://www.thehrdirector.com/features/diversity-and-equality/rise-remote-working-creating-diversity-tech/>

Virtual Classrooms

Why online schooling was a positive experience and not a struggle for children during pandemic

Through the pandemic, for some children, the online environment was an extension of how teaching practices like dedicated dialogue circles presented ways children's opinions and thoughts could be shared. For these children, enforced online schooling overall was a positive experience and not a struggle.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/why-online-schooling-was-a-positive-experience-and-not-a-struggle-for-children-during-pandemic/articleshow/93311467.cms>

Public Policies

Novavax Covid-19 vaccine should carry warning for possible heart side-effects

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) is recommending that Novavax's Covid-19 vaccine carry a warning of the possibility of two types of heart inflammation that could be triggered as a side effect. The EMA confirmed that the heart conditions – myocarditis and pericarditis – should be listed as new side effects in the product information for the vaccine, Reuters confirmed on Wednesday, August 3. When discussing the Novavax Covid vaccine the American Medical Association's (AMA) Doctor Sandra Fryhofer who is the liaison to the Advisory Committee on Immunisation Practices said: "We now have a third type of vaccine in the fight against COVID."

<https://euroweeklynews.com/2022/08/03/novavax-covid-19-vaccine-should-carry-warning-for-possible-heart-side-effects/>

Eli Lilly to make COVID-19 antibody drug commercially available from August

Eli Lilly and Co said on Wednesday it plans to make its COVID-19 antibody drug commercially available to U.S. states as well as hospitals and other healthcare providers from August. The drug, bebtelovimab, had received authorization in the United States in February for the treatment of mild-to-moderate COVID-19 among adults and children. Eli Lilly entered an agreement in June to supply an additional 150,000 doses of the drug to the U.S. government. The U.S. government will exhaust their supply of bebtelovimab as early as the week of August 22 and, without congressional appropriations, does not have the funds to purchase more, Lilly told Reuters.

<https://financialpost.com/pm/business-pmn/eli-lilly-to-make-covid-19-antibody-drug-commercially-available-from-august>

Moderna's COVID vaccine approved for vulnerable young children

The ATAGI experts have recommended children aged between six months and five years, who have a higher risk of developing severe illness from COVID, will be able to receive the Moderna vaccine from September 5.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-08-03/modernas-covid-vaccine-approved-for-vulnerable/14003002>

SINOVAC COVID-19 Vaccine Approved for Use in Children Above 6 months of Age in Hong Kong

Sinovac Biotech Ltd. a leading provider of biopharmaceutical products in China, announced that based on related clinical trials and studies of vaccination for local children and adolescents, the Health Bureau of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China has approved the Company's COVID-19 vaccine (CoronaVac), intended for children aged 6 months to 3 years. The vaccination schedule for this age group follows the same vaccination schedule of older children.

<https://apnews.com/press-release/business-wire/covid-health-clinical-trials-sinovac-biotech-ltd-e8faa40d447b41558ff11864bd2208cd>

EU signs joint procurement deal with Spain's HIPRA for COVID vaccines

The European Commission said on Tuesday it had signed a joint procurement contract with Spanish pharmaceutical firm HIPRA for the supply of its protein COVID-19 vaccine, which will be available if approved by the European Medicines Agency (EMA). The European Union's executive said in a statement that 14 countries are participating in the agreement, under which they can purchase up to 250 million doses.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/eu-signs-joint-procurement-deal-with-hipra-covid-vaccines-2022-08-02/>

Maintaining Services

COVID deaths: US stuck in 'horrible plateau,' experts say. Here's why.

"COVID is over" might trend within social media circles, but weekly U.S. death tolls tell a different story. The pace of COVID-19 deaths has remained relatively steady since May, despite an uptick in July to about 400 a day, according to a USA TODAY analysis of Johns Hopkins University data. "We're sitting on this horrible plateau," said Dr. Daniel Griffin, an infectious disease specialist with Pro Health Care in New York and a clinical instructor of medicine at Columbia University. "It's been this way for the past couple of months, and we're getting used to it."

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2022/08/03/covid-deaths-us-stuck-horrible-plateau-experts-say-heres-why/10202358002/>

Healthcare Innovations

Pfizer, BioNTech Initiate Phase 2 Study of Enhanced COVID-19 mRNA-Based Vaccine

Pfizer and BioNTech have initiated an active-controlled, observer-blind, phase 2, randomized study to evaluate the immune response, safety, and tolerability of an enhanced COVID-19 mRNA-based vaccine candidate at a 30-µg dose level, Pfizer said in a statement. The enhanced vaccine, BNT162b5, will consist of RNAs encoding enhanced prefusion spike proteins for the SARS-CoV-2 ancestral strain and an Omicron variant. The enhanced spike protein encoded from the mRNAs in the vaccine has been modified with the aim of increasing the breadth and magnitude of the immune response that could better protect against COVID-19. This is the first of multiple vaccine candidates with an enhanced design that the companies plan to evaluate, according to the statement.

<https://www.pharmacytimes.com/view/pfizer-biontech-initiate-phase-2-study-of-enhanced-covid-19-mrna-based-vaccine>

Omicron better at invading young noses than other variants; smell loss may predict memory issues

The Omicron variant may be more efficient at infecting children through the nose than previous versions of the coronavirus, a small study suggests. Earlier in the pandemic, children's noses had been less welcoming to the virus that causes COVID-19 than adults' noses. Studies of the original SARS-CoV-2 and some of its variants found the virus was met with stronger immune responses in the cells lining young noses than in adults' nasal-lining cells, and it was less efficient at making copies of itself in children's noses. But recent test-tube experiments mixing the virus with nasal cells from 23 healthy children and 15 healthy adults found the antiviral defenses in kids' noses "was markedly less pronounced in the case of Omicron," researchers reported on Monday in PLOS Biology.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/omicron-better-invading-young-noses-than-other-variants-smell-loss-may-predict-2022-08-02/>