

Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

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Isolation Tips

Chinese capital steps up COVID measures as cases quadruple

China's capital, Beijing, has dialled up measures to stop COVID, strengthening public checks and locking down some residential compounds after a quadrupling of its case load in recent weeks, just as a key Communist Party congress entered full swing. The city of 21 million people on Thursday reported 18 new locally transmitted cases for the previous day, bringing the tally for the past 10 days to 197. That is four times more than the 49 infections detected in the previous 10-day period. While the number of cases is very small compared with other countries, China's zero-COVID policy has compelled the capital to ratchet up preventive measures, particularly with the Communist Party holding its once-every-five-years congress this week, during which President Xi Jinping is expected to win a precedent-breaking third term as its leader.

https://news.google.com/__i/rss/rd/articles/CBMiZ2h0dHBzOi8vd3d3LnJldXRlcnMuY29tL3dvcmxkL2NoaW5hL2NoaW5lc2UtY2FwaXRhbC1zdGVwcy11cC1jb3ZpZC1tZWZdXjIcy1jYXNlcy1xdWFkcnVwbGUtMjAyMi0xMCOyMC_SAQA?oc=5

Hygiene Helpers

Cases of BQ.1, BQ.1.1 COVID variants double in U.S. as Europe warns of rise

U.S. health regulators on Friday estimated that BQ.1 and closely related BQ.1.1 accounted for 16.6% of coronavirus variants in the country, nearly doubling from last week, while Europe expects them to become the dominant variants in a month. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control said the variants are likely to drive up cases in the coming weeks to months in the European region. The two variants are descendants of Omicron's BA.5 subvariant, which is the dominant form of the coronavirus in the United States. Regulators in Europe and the U.S. have recently authorized vaccine boosters that target it.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/covid-variants-bq1-bq-1-1-make-up-over-16-us-cases-2022-10-21/>

Covid-19 Vaccines Should Be Among Regular Immunizations, CDC Advisers Say

Vaccine experts advising the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention supported adding Covid-19 vaccines to the agency's lists of recommended regular immunizations. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, or ACIP, voted unanimously on Thursday in support of including Covid-19 shots on the lists of measles, tetanus and other inoculations that adults and children 6 months and older should get in the U.S. Now, it is up to the CDC to sign off.

https://news.google.com/__i/rss/rd/articles/CBMidGh0dHBzOi8vd3d3Lndzai5jb20vYXJ0aWNsZXMvY292aWQtMTktdmFjY2luZXNlcy1jZGMtYWR2aXNlcnMtc2F5LTExNjY2Mjg2OTkz0gEA?oc=5

Community Activities

Hong Kong Covid News: City to Lift Public Gathering Limit to 12

Hong Kong will increase the number of people allowed to gather in public, with the substantial tweak to one of its most criticized Covid rules marking another gradual step toward reviving its reputation as a financial hub. As many as 12 people will be able to congregate together in public places starting Oct. 20, the government said in a statement late Tuesday. That's up from the current limit of four people. The change brings the rule in line with the cap for groups at restaurants, gyms and theme parks. But the ongoing limits have been criticized by health professionals as lacking scientific

support given as many as 240 people are allowed to attend an indoor banquet.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-10-18/hong-kong-to-lift-public-gathering-limit-to-12-in-reopening-push>

Working Remotely

The War to Define What Work Looks Like

The workplace is in the middle of an unusual collision between what bosses and workers want. Employees feel empowered after two years of changing their work habits and leverage gained in a tight labor market. Employers are under increasing pressure to cut costs and boost performance as inflation soars, markets plunge and a possible U.S. recession looms. The result is a battleground at many companies. Some have already backed down on their September return-to-work policies, facing pushback from employees. Others are leaving jobs unfilled because they can't afford what employees think they should be paid. Middle managers are increasingly caught between these conflicting priorities as they try to keep bosses and workers happy.

https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-war-to-define-what-work-looks-like-11666411221?mod=hp_lead_pos7

Zoom, Teams, Slack Are Wreaking Havoc on Employee Productivity

Shifting between multiple apps to get stuff done drains workers' time, efficiency and engagement. Can anything be done?

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-10-18/tech-fatigue-has-employees-zooming-in-and-zoning-out?srnd=premium-uk>

Americans Reclaim 60 Million Commuting Hours in Remote-Work Perk

Americans who are working from home have reclaimed 60 million hours that they used to spend commuting to an office each day. They're now using that time to get more sleep instead. That's the takeaway from a research by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, which analyzed data from the American Time Use Survey to see what US workers spent their time on when they weren't stuck on a crowded train or locked in traffic. The main findings: Employees spent fewer total hours working and substantially more on sleep and leisure.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-10-18/americans-reclaim-60-million-commuting-hours-in-remote-work-perk?srnd=premium-uk&leadSource=uverify%20wall>

Virtual Classrooms

Lessons from students in how to adapt teaching to online learning

Dr Nick Young, senior lecturer from the School of Education within Cardiff Met University. was nominated for a THE award linked to innovation. He is creating some guidance for academic staff on how they could adapt their teaching to online learning, and to try and engage students in quality teaching interactions.

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/lessons-students-how-adapt-teaching-online-learning>

When to Outsource Online Learning, and When Not To

Like a lot of professors whose field of study is higher education, Jeffrey C. Sun frequently gets asked by administrators at his institution to weigh in on thorny issues they're debating. When his bosses at the University of Louisville were considering how best to expand their online learning offerings, they asked Sun, a Distinguished University Scholar, for his thoughts on whether the university should hire an online program management (OPM) company or build the in-house expertise itself.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2022/10/19/guide-pros-and-cons-outsourcing-online-education>

The Surprising Ways Teachers' Biases Play Out in Virtual Classrooms

Virtual learning is nowhere near its pandemic peak, but it has entered the K-12 education mainstream and remains an option for many students. That is why it is important for educators and

policymakers to understand that remote learning can be an environment primed to draw out teachers' unconscious biases, according to a new study. When asked to evaluate identical student math work in a simulated virtual Zoom classroom, teachers were more likely to recommend that Black students get tested for special education than white students and that boys get tested for gifted programs more than girls, the researchers found.

<https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/the-surprising-ways-teachers-biases-play-out-in-virtual-classrooms/2022/10>

Public Policies

Spain Drops COVID-19 Vaccine, Test Requirement For Entry — What To Know

Spain dropped all COVID-19-related entry rules on Friday, becoming one of the last European countries to do so. Going forward, Spain will no longer require travellers from outside the European Union to show proof of vaccination, a negative test, or proof of recovery to enter, according to the government. That puts Spain in line with nearly every other country in Europe that has dropped pandemic-era travel restrictions.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMieWh0dHBzOi8vd3d3LnRyYXZlZGFuZGxlaXN1cmVpbmRpYS5pbj9pbnNpZ2h0L3doYXQteW91LW5lZWQtdG8ta25vdy9zcGFpbj1kcm9wcy1jb3ZpZC0xOS12YWNjaW5lLXRlc3QtdHJhdmVsLXJlc3RyaWN0aW9ucy_SAX1odHRwczovL3d3dy50cmF2ZWxhbmRsZWlzdXJlaW5kaWEuaW4vaW5zaWdodC93aGF0LXlvdS1uZWVklXRvLWtub3cvc3BhaW4tZHZjvHMtY292aWQtdMTktdmFjY2luZS10ZXN0LXRyYXZlZC1yZXR0cmVudG91bnMvYW1wLw?oc=5

U.S. CDC advisers approve adding COVID shots to vaccine schedules

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advisory committee on vaccines on Thursday approved adding COVID-19 vaccines to the agency's recommended immunization schedules for both children and adults. The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) voted unanimously to add the vaccines to the schedules, which contain recommendations to physicians on which shots their patients should receive and when. Several committee members stressed that they were not setting a requirement for anyone to receive the shots. The CDC has recommended that Americans over 6 months of age should receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMiaWh0dHBzOi8vd3d3LnJldXRlcjMuY29tL3dvcmxkL3VzL3VzLWNkYy1hZHZpc2Vycy1hcHB3ZlZlWFkZGluZy1jb3ZpZC1zaG90cy12YWNjaW5lLXNjaGVkdWxlc0yMDIyLWtEwLTIwL9IBAA?oc=5

Trump Aides Interfered With CDC Over Covid for Political Gain, House Says

The CDC bowed to the Trump administration's demands to change the editorial process of its weekly scientific journal after warnings from then health secretary Alex Azar to "get in line," a House investigation found. The pressure faced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to change the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report's procedures was one of several instances of political interference by former President Donald Trump's aides that the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis identified in a report released Monday. The report was provided to Bloomberg Law ahead of the official release.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMibWh0dHBzOi8vd3d3LmJsbnIyYmV5Zy5jb20vbmV3cy9hcnRpY2xlcy8yMDIyLWtEwLTIwL3RydW1wLXNtY2RjLWNoYW5nZWQtd2Vla2x5LXJlcG9ydmHtaG91c2UyY292aWQtdGFuZS1uZmVudG91bnMvYW1wLw?oc=5

FDA Authorizes Novavax Covid-19 Shot as Booster for Adults

The Food and Drug Administration granted emergency authorization to Novavax Inc.'s Covid-19 shot as a booster for adults. The shot targets the original strain of the virus, whereas the updated booster shots from Moderna Inc. and Pfizer Inc. and its partner BioNTech SE, authorized in August by the FDA, target both the original strain and newer Omicron strains. The Novavax shot also uses a protein platform, whereas the other two companies' boosters use messenger RNA, a newer technology. The Novavax booster was authorized on Wednesday for adults who received a primary series of vaccines

at least six months prior and who don't want or can't access or might have medical reasons to avoid the dual-target booster shots from Pfizer or Moderna.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMiY2h0dHBzOi8vd3d3Lndzai5jb20vYXJ0aWNsZXMvZmRhLWF1dGhvcml6ZXMtbn92YXZheC1jb3ZpZC0xOS1zaG90LWFzLWJvb3N0ZXItZm9yLWFKdWx0cy0xMTY2NjE5Njg1NdlBAA?oc=5

Pfizer (PFE) Says Omicron Booster Vaccine Lifts Antibodies Against New Variants

Pfizer Inc. and its German vaccine partner said their booster tailored to the latest omicron variants raised more antibodies against the dominant strains of Covid-19 when compared with the original shot designed to fight the form of the virus. Blood from 80 volunteers collected seven days after the booster shot showed an increase in neutralizing antibodies against the BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants in a study, Pfizer and BioNTech SE said in a statement Thursday. The vaccines were authorized without data showing their performance in humans. Pfizer and BioNTech plan to release additional data in coming weeks measuring immune responses one month following administration of the new bivalent booster.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-10-13/pfizer-says-omicron-booster-lifts-antibodies-against-new-variant>

Maintaining Services

China's COVID lockdowns spell relief for Europe's energy security worries

China's President Xi Jinping has some good news for Europe — his country's draconian zero-COVID policies aren't likely to be dropped. That's a relief for European buyers of liquefied natural gas, as China's economic slowdown has freed up LNG cargos crucial to replacing the Russian gas that used to supply about 40 percent of European demand. "Regardless of what you think about the Chinese zero-COVID policy, simply looking at it only from the perspective of European gas supplies, it would be very helpful if China continued this policy," said Dennis Hesselning, head of gas at the EU's energy regulator agency ACER.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/china-covid-lockdown-spell-relief-europe-energy-security/>

'Fractured' pandemic response failed the most vulnerable, independent report finds

An independent review of Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has found ill-conceived policies, politically driven health orders and excessive use of lockdowns failed to protect the old, disregarded the young and abandoned some of the nation's most disadvantaged communities. The review, led by former top public servant Peter Shergold, urges federal and state governments to learn from mistakes and overhaul planning, to broaden the advice provided to national cabinet and restore trust in how decisions are made.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/fractured-pandemic-response-failed-the-most-vulnerable-independent-report-finds-20221018-p5bqso.html>

Swiss to destroy 9 million expired Moderna COVID-19 jabs

Switzerland will destroy 9 million doses of Moderna COVID-19 vaccine that have reached their expiry date, with another 5.1 million vaccine jabs set to meet the same fate by February, the government said on Wednesday. The wastage reflects the Swiss strategy of ordering more vaccines than it needed to ensure its population of around 8.7 million would get sufficient supplies even in the event of supply bottlenecks or quality issues.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMifWh0dHBzOi8vd3d3LnlldXRlcnMuY29tL2J1c2luZXNzL2h1YWx0aGNhcmUtcGhhcm1hY2V1dGJjYXZL3N3aXNzLWRRic3Ryb3ktOS1taWxsaW9uLWV4cGlyZWQtbW9kZXJ1YS1jb3ZpZC0xOS1qYWJzLTlwMjltMTAtMTkv0gEA?oc=5

Healthcare Innovations

Omicron subvariants reflect a 'viral evolution on steroids'

An omicron subvariant is once again demonstrating immune-dodging abilities, posing a threat to

both vaccinated and previously infected individuals. A report published Wednesday in the New England Journal of Medicine suggests that the subvariant, called BA.4.6, could drive reinfections. As of Friday, BA.4.6 accounted for just over 12% of new Covid cases in the U.S. BA.5, meanwhile, has been detected in nearly 68% of new cases, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/omicron-subvariants-ba46-can-evade-immunity-may-lead-reinfections-rcna52950?cid=sm_npd_nn_tw_ma

Addiction drug shows promise lifting long COVID brain fog, fatigue

Lauren Nichols, a 34-year-old logistics expert for the U.S. Department of Transportation in Boston, has been suffering from impaired thinking and focus, fatigue, seizures, headache and pain since her COVID-19 infection in the spring of 2020. Last June, her doctor suggested low doses of naltrexone, a generic drug typically used to treat alcohol and opioid addiction. After more than two years of living in "a thick, foggy cloud," she said, "I can actually think clearly."

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/addiction-drug-shows-promise-lifting-long-covid-brain-fog-fatigue-2022-10-18/>

Long Covid Disables Millions Worldwide, Even as Rates Ease, Study Shows

Long Covid eases with time, according to a study that found about 1% of coronavirus patients had persistent symptoms for a year or more. In the first rigorous assessment of the magnitude of long Covid on a global scale, researchers found 6.2% of people who had Covid-19 in the pandemic's first two years experienced at least one of three main groups of symptoms three months later. Of those patients, 15% were still afflicted after a year, they found. Although the probability of having chronic health problems from Covid is relatively low, the vast number of cases -- at least 670 million worldwide -- leaves a substantial burden of disability, said Christopher Murray, director of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington, where the study was conducted.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-10-10/long-covid-eases-with-time-but-disables-millions-study-shows>