

COVID-19 Daily Update

April 27, 2020

Summary

The United States has 972,969 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 55,118 reported related deaths. There are more than 3 million confirmed COVID-19 cases worldwide, and the global death toll has surpassed 200,000. CDC now recognizes chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, and new loss of taste or smell as symptoms of COVID-19. A recent study found that COVID-19 is most contagious in the two days before symptom onset. These findings are consistent with anecdotal evidence of relatively frequent spread by asymptomatic carriers. The Small Business Administration started taking requests for emergency aid for small businesses on Monday morning. A majority of German's federal states are implementing a compulsory face covering rule, with fines for those who do not wear masks while on public transportation, long-distance trains, or inside shops. New Zealand announced that it has eliminated widespread community transmission of COVID-19.

The nursing home industry is asking states for immunity from lawsuits for owners and employees of the nation's 15,600 facilities during the pandemic. At least six states have provided explicit immunity from coronavirus lawsuits for nursing homes. Restaurants across Tennessee opened to dine-in customers for the first time in nearly a month, one day after the state reported its highest single-day jump in newly confirmed COVID-19 cases. Restaurant capacity is limited to 50% and tables must be no less than six feet apart, with no more than six people per table. Bar areas remain closed, self-serve buffets are forbidden, and employees must wear masks and gloves at all times.

New York reported 337 COVID-19 deaths on Monday, the lowest daily death toll since March 30. New York is the first state to cancel its Democratic presidential primary, previously scheduled for June 23. 16 states have postponed their primaries and many have taken measures to encourage voting by mail. A New York State antibody study randomly tested 7,500 people at grocery stores and shopping locations and estimates that 14.9% of New Yorkers have developed some immunity to the virus. Governor Cuomo announced that his stay-at-home order will likely be extended beyond May 15 in many parts of the state. Mayor de Blasio announced that New York City will close at least 40 miles of streets to vehicle traffic over the next month with the ultimate goal of closing up to 100 miles as long as stay-at-home order remain in effect. A recent poll found that 60% of people in New York City personally know someone who tested positive for COVID-19 and 46% know someone who died of the virus.

General/Employer Guidance

Presidential updates

- [White House Canceled—and then rescheduled—Monday’s COVID-19 Daily Briefing](#), April 27
 - The White House cancelled its daily COVID-19 briefing scheduled for today.
 - President Trump continued to tweet about news coverage related to the pandemic, including [tweeting](#), “There has never been, in the history of our Country, a more vicious or hostile Lamestream Media than there is right now, even in the midst of a National Emergency, the Invisible Enemy!”
 - Kayleigh McEnany, the newly appointed White House press secretary, [announced](#) that the regular briefing would go on as scheduled and that President Trump would provide additional testing guidance.

World Health Organization (WHO)

- [WHO Director-General’s opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19](#), April 27
 - WHO Director-General Tedros stressed that “the pandemic is far from over” and noted that “we will need a vaccine to control this virus.”
 - WHO noted that COVID-19 cases and deaths are underreported across Africa, Eastern Europe, and Latin America because of low testing capacity.
 - WHO is concerned about the impact the pandemic will have on health services for children. Children may be at relatively low risk from severe disease and death from COVID-19, but can be at high risk from other diseases that can be prevented with vaccines. WHO emphasized the need to continue routine vaccinations for children during the pandemic.

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- [CDC Expands List of COVID-19 Symptoms](#), April 27
 - CDC recently expanded the list of COVID-19 symptoms, a step that reflects the broad variation and unpredictability in the way the illness can affect individual patients.
 - The expanded list now includes chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, and new loss of taste or smell. Previously CDC listed just three symptoms: fever, cough and shortness of breath.
- [Interim Guidance for Meat and Poultry Processing Workers and Employers](#), April 26
 - Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and CDC released joint guidance for meat processing workers and employers.
 - CDC advises that critical infrastructure workers, such as meat and poultry processors, may continue to work following potential exposure to COVID-19, provided that they remain asymptomatic and additional precautions are implemented to protect them and the community
 - There have been multiple recent [outbreaks](#) of COVID-19 among meat and poultry processing facility workers in the United States. Tyson Foods recently warned that “the food supply chain is breaking” as pork, beef, and chicken plants are being forced to close.

New York State

- [*New York Board of Elections Cancels Democratic Presidential Primary*](#), April 27
 - New York officials canceled the state's Democratic presidential primary, previously scheduled for June 23.
 - The move followed the decision by Senator Bernie Sanders to concede the Democratic presidential nomination to Joe Biden, rendering the primary unnecessary. Bernie Sanders campaign opposed the cancellation and urged the Board to hold a primary election in the interest of party unity.
 - New York is the first state to cancel its presidential primary. 16 states have postponed their primaries and many have taken measures to encourage voting by mail.
- [*Deaths keep falling in New York as the region's plans for reopening take shape*](#), April 27
 - New York reported 337 COVID-19 deaths on Monday, the lowest daily death toll since March 30.
 - Governor Cuomo updated the preliminary results of a statewide COVID-19 antibody study. New York State randomly tested 7,500 people at grocery stores and shopping locations across the State for antibodies against COVID-19. The study estimates that 14.9% of New Yorkers have developed some immunity to the virus. The infection rate is higher than the 13.9% cited when the initial results from 3,000 people were disclosed last week.
 - Governor Cuomo announced that his stay-at-home order will likely be extended beyond May 15 in many parts of the State. Restrictions could be relaxed in some regions if they have sufficient hospital capacity to handle a potential surge in cases and robust programs to test, trace, and isolate the contacts of those who test positive.
 - New York plans to tap an emergency fund to give \$25 million to help depleted food banks and launch an initiative to purchase dairy and food products from farmers who would otherwise throw them away due to weak demand.

New York City

- [*NYC to close up to 100 miles of streets during coronavirus outbreak*](#), April 27
 - Mayor de Blasio announced that the City will close at least 40 miles of streets to vehicle traffic over the next month with the ultimate goal of closing up to 100 miles as long as the stay-at-home order remains in effect. The goal is to provide space for socially-distanced recreation. The effort will start with streets near and within parks.
 - The City plans to hire 1,000 [contact tracers](#) to find and call people who have had contact with a COVID-19 patient and warn them to take steps to prevent the spread.
- [*A poll finds that nearly half of NYC voters know someone who died of COVID-19*](#), April 27
 - According to a poll by the Siena College Research Institute, 60% of people in New York City say they personally know someone who tested positive and 46% know someone who died of the virus. Outside New York City, fewer people said they knew someone who had died from the coronavirus: 36% in the City's suburbs and 13% in upstate New York.

- [COVID-19 Pandemic Patient Surge: Preparing for Crisis Care](#), April 27
 - The New York City Department of Health (NYCDOH) issued guidance on crisis care for health care providers across the City. NYCDOH outlines crisis care considerations for COVID-19 when available resources may not meet demands and the conventional standard of care must be altered.

Other Related Updates

- [A House panel launches an investigation into Trump’s decision to halt WHO funding](#), April 27
 - The House Foreign Affairs Committee announced it would launch an investigation into President Trump’s recent decision to halt funding to the World Health Organization, calling the move a “political distraction” from the administration’s lackluster response to the coronavirus global pandemic.
- [Preliminary results for an arthritis drug as a treatment for Covid-19 are disappointing](#), April 27
 - Regeneron Pharmaceuticals and Sanofi announced the preliminary results of an ongoing clinical trial for sarilumab for the treatment of hospitalized patients with COVID-19. Sarilumab is typically used to treat arthritis.
 - The clinical trial randomly assigned 457 hospitalized patients to receive 400 milligrams of sarilumab, 200 milligrams of it, or a placebo. The patients fell into two groups — “severe,” meaning they required oxygen but did not need a ventilator or so-called high flow oxygen, and “critical,” who needed a ventilator, high flow oxygen, or were in intensive care.
 - Although the drug reduced c-reactive protein, which rises in severe inflammation, it did not help the severely ill patients and many of those patients recovered on their own. 80% were discharged from the hospital, whether or not they got the drug. The study will continue with only critically ill patients. Results are expected in early June.
- [Doctors Hypothesize Whether Estrogen and Other Sex Hormones Could Help Men Survive COVID-19](#), April 27
 - Women are less likely to become acutely ill with COVID-19 and are far more likely to survive. Scientists hypothesize that that increased female sex hormones may account for differences in immunity.
 - Two clinical trials are underway to dose male COVID-19 patients with female sex hormones for a limited duration at Cedars-Sinai in Los Angeles and the Renaissance School of Medicine at Stony Brook University
 - Some experts who study sex differences in immunity, however, warned that hormones may fail to be the magic bullet that some are hoping for; even elderly women with COVID-19 are outliving their male peers, and there is a drastic reduction in levels of hormones for women after menopause.
- [FDA Continues to Ensure Availability of Alcohol-Based Hand Sanitizer During the Pandemic](#), April 27
 - FDA announced that 1,500 manufacturers have registered with the agency to produce hand sanitizer.

- FDA highlighted the importance of using denatured alcohol in hand sanitizer products. Adding denaturants to the alcohol renders the product more bitter and less appealing to ingest, particularly for young children. Calls to the National Poison Data System related to hand sanitizer increased by 79% last month as compared to March 2019.
- [*CMS Suspends Advance Payment Program*](#), April 26
 - The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced that it is suspending its advance payment program and is “reevaluating” its accelerated payment program. The decision effectively could eliminate two key financial tools some home health agencies have used to manage cash flow during the coronavirus outbreak.
 - CMS’s payment programs provide funding based on historical payments when there is a disruption in claims submission or processing. On March 28, CMS had announced that the payment program would be available nationwide during the COVID-19 public health emergency and expanded the scope of providers that could take advantage of it.
- [*COVID-19 Might Be Most Transmissible in the Presymptomatic Period*](#), April 24
 - A recent study, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, found that that COVID-19 is most contagious in the two days before symptom onset. These findings are consistent with anecdotal evidence of relatively frequent spread by asymptomatic carriers.
 - A team from Wuhan, China, created models based on data from two different studies of patients with COVID-19. First, they obtained 414 serial throat swabs from 94 moderately ill patients, starting at symptom onset and continuing for the next 32 days. Second, they obtained data from 77 transmission pairs and estimated an incubation period of 5.2 days. The researchers found the highest viral loads on throat swabs collected at symptom onset; the loads rapidly declined during the next 7 days. They estimate that 44% of secondary cases were infected in the 2 days prior to onset of symptoms, at least among transmissions that occurred among people in close contact (e.g., households).

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [*New Illinois Stay at Home Order Announced for May*](#), April 27
- [*Treasury Issues Additional Guidance Regarding Paycheck Protection Program Eligibility*](#), April 24

Send questions to COVID-19-Implications@ropesgray.com