

COVID-19 Daily Update

July 26, 2020

Summary

The United States has 4,197,184 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 146,632 reported related deaths. Dr. Fauci commented that a vaccine likely won't be "widely available" to the American public until "several months" into 2021. COVID-19 outbreaks in the South and West have severely strained testing nationwide, leading to renewed shortages of vital testing supplies and weeklong backlogs at major labs. Quest's average turnaround time for non-priority patients is around seven days, and the wait time can be up to two weeks. LabCorp announced on Sunday, July 26, that it added testing capacity and could now process 180,000 tests per day, reducing its turnaround time to two to three days. FDA authorized LabCorp's COVID-19 test for use in people who do not have COVID-19 symptoms or who have no reason to suspect COVID-19 infection. The authorization eliminates the need for a provider to consider risk factors such as exposure or community spread when prescribing this test. FDA Commissioner Hahn commented that this "is a step toward the type of broad screening that may help enable the re-opening of schools and workplaces."

Saturday, July 25, marked the fifth consecutive day of more than 1,000 reported COVID-19 deaths in the United States, according to the COVID Tracking Project. The percentage of positive tests nationally has increased from 5.4% on Memorial Day to 8.6% on July 23. California, South Carolina, Georgia, Texas, and Florida set records for their seven-day averages of daily deaths on Sunday, July 26. In Florida, the state department of health reports that more than a third of the cases in the state have been among people age 15 through 34. In Louisiana, Governor Edwards extended phase two of the state's re-opening for another 28 days in response to rising COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and fatalities. McDonalds announced that customers will be required to wear face masks in its more than 14,000 stores across the country. A group of 3,800 non-profit organizations sent a letter to congressional leaders asking to increase the tax deduction for charitable contributions and to expand the Paycheck Protection Program to include larger non-profits.

New York reported three deaths, 637 hospitalizations, and 155 COVID-19 patients in urgent care on Saturday, July 25. Approximately 536, or 1.0%, of the 53,568 tests administered in New York on July 25 were positive for COVID-19. Governor Cuomo called on members of New York's Congressional Delegation to fight for state and local aid in the federal stimulus package, which is expected to be announced this week. According to the Governor, New York faces "a \$14 billion loss of revenue" and has "about a \$5 billion cost" for fighting COVID-19. Governor Cuomo warned that the expiration of \$600 in weekly pandemic unemployment payments would create "havoc" for New York residents.

Presidential updates

- [White House Advisers Comment on COVID-19](#), July 25
 - Mark Meadows, President Trump's chief of staff, [commented](#) that the White House is opposed to extending current federal unemployment relief benefits. The \$600-per-week federal unemployment payments passed under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, expired this week in most states.
 - Meadows downplayed the role of masks in containing COVID-19 and stated that “even those areas... that have had mandatory mask provisions for several weeks... continue to see this virus escalate,” citing Southern Florida as an example.
 - Meadows stated that “it’s not masks [and] its not shutting down the economy” that will stop the pandemic. Instead, Meadows expressed that “hopefully, it is American ingenuity that will allow for therapies and vaccines to ultimately conquer this.”
 - Larry Kudlow, White House chief economic adviser, [expressed](#) that the federal government would extend a four-month moratorium on evictions that ended on Friday, July 24, and that \$1,200 direct-impact payments will be part of the negotiated stimulus package.

World Health Organization (WHO)

- [COVID-19 Situation Report – 187](#), July 25
 - WHO released a set of [practical steps](#) for policy makers to implement the prescriptions of the [WHO Manifesto](#) for COVID-19 recovery. The Manifesto lists a number of global goals, including protecting the environment and investing in essential services.

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

- [COVIDView Weekly Surveillance Summary of U.S. COVID-19 Activity](#), July 24
 - CDC summarized key COVID-19 disease indicators for the week ending July 18.
 - The average of respiratory specimens testing positive for COVID-19 increased in four surveillance regions, with the highest percentages in the southeast (13.9%); south central (15.7%); and southwest (9.7%).
 - The overall cumulative hospitalization rate is 120.9 per 100,000, up from 113.6 per 100,000 during the previous week. The highest rates were in people 65 years and older, at 338.2 per 100,000, up from 321.8 per 100,000.
 - Based on death certificate data, the percentage of total deaths attributed to pneumonia, influenza, or COVID-19 increased from June 27 to July 11 for the first time since mid-April. Deaths fell slightly from July 11 to July 18, from 11.5 to 9.5%, but remains above the epidemic threshold.

New York State

- [New York State COVID-19 Updates](#), July 26
 - New York reported 3 deaths, 637 hospitalizations, and 155 COVID-19 patients in urgent care on Saturday, July 25.
 - Approximately 536, or 1.0%, of the 53,568 tests administered in New York on July 25 were positive for COVID-19.
 - Governor Cuomo called on members of New York's Congressional Delegation to fight for state and local aid in the federal stimulus package, which is expected to be

announced this week. New York faces “a \$14 billion loss of revenue” and has “about a \$5 billion cost” for fighting COVID-19.

- Governor Cuomo warned that the expiration of \$600 in weekly pandemic unemployment insurance payments would create “havoc” for New York residents.
- Cuomo cautioned that the State may cut funding by as much as 20% if no federal aid is approved for states, including funding for schools, local governments, and health care organizations.
- New York State Liquor Authority and New York State Police Task Force found 105 social distancing violations at bars and restaurants on Friday, July 24, and Saturday, July 25. Businesses found in violation face fines up to \$10,000 per violation, while egregious violations can result in the immediate suspension of their liquor license.

New York City

- [*New York City COVID-19 Updates*](#), July 26
 - The City [announced](#) plans to designate 12 streets as “Play Streets,” converting the space into an activity area for children.
 - The City will set up activity stations for arts and crafts, sports, reading, and dance, along with benches for families. The City will launch Play Streets locations on a rolling basis beginning this week, and will operate through September 4.
- [*COVID-19 Testing and Tracing Goes In-Person in New York City*](#), July 25
 - New York City’s Test and Trace Corps have an 89% success rate reaching City residents after a positive test result.
 - Over the last two weeks, 200 Community Engagement Specialists have started reaching unresponsive individuals by going door to door.
 - Dr. Ted Long, executive director of the Corps, noted that “our tracers knocking on their doors is one way for us to get through to them if we couldn’t reach them by phone and ask how we could help.”

Other Related Updates

- [*ICE Confirms New Foreign Students May Not Take Online-Only Course Loads in the United States*](#), July 24
 - Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) confirmed that its guidance granting visa flexibility to non-immigrant international students in the United States applies only to those who were actively enrolled in American schools on March 9.
 - ICE announced that “non-immigrant students in new or initial status after March 9 will not be able to enter the U.S. to enroll in a U.S. school as a non-immigrant student for the fall term to pursue a full course of study that is 100% online.”
 - In an [FAQ](#) document last updated on July 15, ICE stated that newly enrolled international students who are already in the U.S. can stay in the country. It also suggests deferment as an alternative for new students whose schools are modifying operations because of the coronavirus pandemic.
 - Harvard College Dean Khurana recently [emailed](#) students, noting that international first-year students will not be permitted to come to campus in the fall since course instruction will be fully remote. Khurana stated that those students can take their courses remotely from home or defer by July 31.

- A Chronicle of Higher Education [tracker](#) notes that of 1,250 colleges, 12% are planning for online-only instruction, 34% proposed a hybrid model, and 50% plan to operate in-person.
- [Video Case Study of Face Coverings and Masks to Minimize Droplet Dispersion](#), July 24
 - Researchers in Australia used high-speed cameras to photograph light scattered by aerosols and respiratory droplets that were expelled during speaking, coughing, and sneezing when a volunteer wore different masks.
 - A three-layer surgical mask was the most effective at limiting droplet spread. A two-layer cloth cotton mask was more effective during coughing and sneezing than one made from a single layer, but even the single-layer mask was better than no mask.
 - The authors noted that “guidelines on home-made cloth masks should stipulate multiple layers (at least 3).”
- [FDA Authorizes First Diagnostic Test for Screening People Without Known or Suspected COVID-19 Infection](#), July 24
 - FDA re-issued its emergency use authorization (EUA) to LabCorp for its COVID-19 RT-PCR Test to include two new indications for use: (1) testing for people who do not have COVID-19 symptoms or who have no reason to suspect COVID-19 infection; and (2) to allow pooled sample testing containing up to five individual swab specimens.
 - The LabCorp test was originally issued an EUA on March 16 for use only in people suspected of being ill with COVID-19 by their health care provider.
 - Molecular diagnostic tests have generally been authorized for people suspected of having COVID-19 by their health care provider, which has allowed asymptomatic people to be tested, when warranted, at the discretion of the health care provider. The new EUA eliminates the need for a provider to consider risk factors such as exposure or community spread when prescribing this test.
 - FDA Commissioner Hahn commented that the EUA “is a step toward the type of broad screening that may help enable the re-opening of schools and workplaces.”

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [The Effect of COVID-19 on Global Private Equity Markets](#), July 23
- [COVID-19: Rethinking the “S” in ESG in Light of the Pandemic](#), July 23
- [Encouraging Internal Reporting to Mitigate COVID-19-Related Risk](#), July 22
- [COVID and Race: A Conversation with Leaders in Health Care](#), July 21
- [Non-Binding Guidance: FDA Regulation of COVID-19 Diagnostic Tests and Return to Work](#), July 21

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