

# COVID-19 Daily Update

July 7, 2020

## Summary

The United States has 2,963,244 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 130,751 reported related deaths. Dr. Fauci recently warned that the country is still “knee-deep in the first wave” of the pandemic. The United States officially withdrew from WHO, effective Monday July 6; notice of the withdrawal was submitted to Congress and United Nations Secretary General Guterres. WHO plans to release updated guidance on airborne COVID-19 transmission and noted that airborne transmission in public settings, especially in “crowded, closed, poorly ventilated settings, cannot be ruled out.” Immigration and Customs Enforcement announced that it will not issue visas to “students enrolled in schools and/or programs that are fully online for the fall semester.” Five U.S. airlines including Delta, United, and Southwest, have agreed to terms for federal loans for passenger airliners under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act. Some groups are raising concerns about potential shortages of personal protective equipment. American Medical Association wrote a letter to FEMA, Vice President Pence, and members of Congress calling for a coordinated national strategy to buy and allocate gear.

Researchers cast doubt on herd immunity strategies after finding that only 5% of the Spanish population carries antibodies for COVID-19, despite the nation being one of the worst-hit by the pandemic. Retail Industry Leaders Association, which represents major retailers such as Target and Walgreens, asked National Governors Association to require that all Americans wear masks in public. The letter states that inconsistent rules among states, and in some cases within states, have confused shoppers and prompted conflicts between customers and workers enforcing rules. In Florida, hospital intensive care units are now full at 54 hospitals across 25 counties. Florida Education Commissioner issued an emergency order requiring “all school boards... to open brick and mortar schools in August at least five days per week for all students.” Local health officials may override the Commissioner’s directive if it is not safe to open schools because of the virus.

New York reported 10 deaths, 836 COVID-19 hospitalizations, and 160 virus cases in intensive care on Tuesday, July 7. Approximately 1% of the 56,736 tests conducted in New York on July 6 were positive for COVID-19. New York added three additional states to its COVID-19 travel advisory, requiring individuals traveling to New York from Delaware, Kansas, and Oklahoma to self-isolate for 14 days. Nineteen states are now included in the travel advisory. Mass transit usage in the City is increasing “substantially” more quickly than car traffic. Mayor De Blasio described the trend as “a good sign that people are feeling more... comfortable and ready to engage.” New York State Department of Health analyzed COVID-19 data and found that COVID-19 fatalities in nursing homes were related to virus transmission through infected nursing home staff.

## Presidential updates

- [United States Formally Withdraws from WHO](#), July 7
  - The White House officially withdrew the United States from WHO, effective Monday July 6. Notice of the withdrawal was formally submitted to the United Nations Secretary General.
  - A source briefed on the withdrawal addressed to the United Nations told CNN that the letter is very short, around three sentences, and confirmed it will trigger a one year withdrawal timeline, but cautioned that they cannot confirm it was the final version.
  - Senator Menendez, the ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, tweeted that “Congress received notification that POTUS officially withdrew the U.S. from the @WHO in the midst of a pandemic.”
  - President Trump initially announced his intention to withdraw from WHO in May and has accused the organization of aiding China in covering up the origins and extent of the virus.

## World Health Organization (WHO)

- [WHO Acknowledges Role of Airborne Transmission in Spreading COVID-19](#), July 7
  - WHO acknowledged emerging evidence of the airborne spread of COVID-19 after 239 scientists from 32 different countries published an [open letter](#) to the organization calling for WHO to update its information on the virus.
  - WHO expressed that “we have to be open to this evidence and understand its implications regarding the modes of transmission and also regarding the precautions that need to be taken.”
  - WHO noted that airborne transmission in public settings, especially in “crowded, closed, poorly ventilated settings, cannot be ruled out.” WHO previously stated that particles from respiratory droplets might become airborne in certain environments, but asserted that it is not a primary driver of spread in the general population.
  - WHO plans to release updated recommendations in a few days. WHO noted that any guidance “has to be carefully done” as it “has implications for billions of people around the world.”
- [COVID-19 Situation Report – 168](#), July 6
  - WHO hosted a [webinar](#) on the increased use on chemical products during the pandemic, including hand sanitizer and disinfectants. WHO analyzed poisoning cases caused by unsafe chemical use, the long-term environmental impact of chemical use, and outlined safety recommendations.
  - UN Secretary-General Guterres [warned](#) that COVID-19 has affected the agency’s sustainable development goals related to poverty, climate change, peace and security, and gender equality.

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

- [CDC Issues Health Advisory on Serious Adverse Health Events Associated with Methanol-Based Hand Sanitizers](#), July 6
  - CDC issued a health advisory on hand sanitizers that contain methanol, a substance often used to create fuel and antifreeze. Hand sanitizer products that are labeled as

- containing ethanol have recently tested positive for methanol contamination; methanol can be toxic when absorbed through the skin and life-threatening when ingested.
- CDC reported that 13 people in Arizona and New Mexico became critically ill in June after ingesting hand sanitizers containing methanol; four people died.
  - CDC urged clinicians to consider methanol poisoning in patients who report hand sanitizer ingestion or repeated topical use and who present with certain symptoms, such as headache, impaired vision, nausea, vomiting, or have lab results indicating anion gap metabolic acidosis.
  - FDA is working to recall methanol-containing hand sanitizers; a list of affected products is available [here](#).

## **New York State**

- [New York State COVID-19 Update](#), July 7
  - New York reported 10 deaths, 836 COVID-19 hospitalizations, and 160 virus cases in intensive care on Tuesday, July 7.
  - Approximately 1% of the 56,736 tests conducted in New York on July 6 were positive for COVID-19.
  - New York added three additional states to its COVID-19 travel advisory, requiring individuals traveling to New York from Delaware, Kansas, and Oklahoma to self-isolate for 14 days. Nineteen states are now included in the travel advisory; a full list is available [here](#).
- [Health Department Issues Report on COVID-19 in Nursing Homes](#), July 6
  - New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) released results of an in-depth [analysis](#) of nursing home data related to COVID-19.
  - The report found that COVID-19 fatalities in nursing homes were related to infected nursing home staff.
  - The average length of time between COVID-19 infections to death is between 18-25 days. The peak number of nursing home staff reported COVID-19 symptoms on March 16, 23 days prior to the date of the peak nursing home fatalities, which occurred on April 8. The report concluded that “it is likely that thousands of employees who were infected in mid-March transmitted the virus unknowingly — through no fault of their own — while working, which then led to resident infection.”
  - The report ruled out the transfer of hospitalized COVID-19 patients to nursing homes as a source of infection. Preliminary data show that residents were admitted to nursing homes a median of 9 days after hospital admission. Health experts believe that individuals infected with the virus are most infectious 2 days before symptoms appear and that they are likely no longer infectious 9 days after symptom onset; thus, by the time these patients were admitted to a nursing home after their hospital stay, they were no longer contagious.

## **New York City**

- [\*Mayor de Blasio Holds Media Availability on COVID-19\*](#), July 6
  - New York City reported 62 hospitalizations, 276 COVID-19 patients in intensive care, and approximately 1% of people testing positive for COVID-19 on July 6.
  - Car traffic into Manhattan has increased on bridges over the East River and Harlem River, by 3% and 7%, respectively, since June 17. Staten Island Ferry ridership is up 15% over the same period; the Ferry resumed full rush-hour service on Monday, July 6.
  - Mass transit usage in the City is increasing “substantially” more quickly than car traffic; De Blasio described the trend as “a good sign that people are feeling more... comfortable and ready to engage.”
  - More than 7,000 restaurants in the city have outdoor seating options. The Mayor described outdoor seating program as a “huge success.” More than 700 City personnel were deployed over the holiday weekend to inspect seating arrangements and ensure compliance with social distancing requirements.

## **Other Related Updates**

- [\*Public Health Organizations Issue Letter to Department of Health\*](#), July 7
  - A group of nearly 350 public health organizations and agencies, including American Public Health Association and Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, wrote a [letter](#) to Health Secretary Azar.
  - The letter expresses concern “about increasing reports of resistance to evidence-based public health messages and threats to public health leaders and agencies ... at a critical juncture when cases of COVID-19 are rising.”
  - The letter urges Azar to “affirm the invaluable role of CDC and resist any efforts that would undermine its mission.” The letter stresses that CDC “is a scientific organization that functions best as an apolitical agency trusted to guide the strategy of our nation to be healthier and safer.”
- [\*Foreign Students Attending Online-Only Schools to be Barred from United States\*](#), July 7
  - Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced plans to discontinue exceptions to visa requirements for international students studying in the United States.
  - ICE will not issue visas to “students enrolled in schools and/or programs that are fully online for the fall semester.” The policy applies to F-1 visas for students attending high school, college, or other educational institutions, and M-1 visas, required for vocational programs.
  - Students attending schools that operate under hybrid models of teaching this fall, offering both in-person and online classes, will be allowed in the U.S. as long as they are “taking the minimum number of online classes required to make normal progress in their degree program” and are not taking a fully online course load.
  - Foreign students whose college campuses will not re-open for the fall semester will be prohibited from entering the country and must leave the United States if they are already present. ICE suggested “transferring to a school with in-person instruction to remain in lawful status.”
  - Harvard University announced on Monday that it would only offer online classes for the 2020-2021 school year. According to a Chronicle of Higher Education [tracker](#), about 8% of colleges are planning for online-only instruction this fall while 23% say

- they are planning to operate under a hybrid model. The majority – 60% – are planning to hold in-person classes, and another 8.5% are still weighing their options.
- Professors at some schools have started to offer in-person independent studies classes to students affected by the policy.
- [\*Health Department Announces Agreements for COVID-19 Investigational Vaccines\*](#), June 7
    - Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced two agreements to manufacture vaccines and treatments for COVID-19 through Operation Warp Speed.
    - HHS entered into a \$1.6 billion agreement with [Novavax](#) for commercial-scale manufacturing of 100 million doses of the company’s investigational vaccine. The vaccine relies on a pre-fusion protein antigen to enhance immune responses.
    - HHS entered into an agreement with [Regeneron](#) for commercial-scale manufacturing of the company’s investigational therapeutic treatment. The treatment combines two monoclonal antibodies that bind to the spike protein of SARS-CoV-2. Regeneron estimates that between 70,000 and 300,000 treatment doses could be available from this project, with the initial doses ready as early as the end of summer and completed this fall.
  - [\*Study on Prevalence of SARS-CoV-2 in Spain Adds Evidence Against Herd Immunity\*](#), July 6
    - A recent study, published in the Lancet, conducted a serological survey of more than 60,000 people in Spain between April and May to determine the prevalence of SARS-CoV-2 infection at a national and regional level.
    - The study found that 5% of those surveyed had SARS-CoV-2 antibodies; researchers concluded that “the majority of the Spanish population is seronegative to SARS-CoV-2 infection, even in hotspot areas.”
    - With a large majority of the population remaining susceptible, “virus circulation can quickly return to early pandemic dimensions in a second wave once measures are lifted.”
    - [Commentary](#) in the Lancet stated that “immunity after SARS-CoV-2 infection is thought to be incomplete and temporary, lasting only several months to a few years.” Based on current research findings, commentators suggest that “any proposed approach to achieve herd immunity through natural infection is not only highly unethical, but also unachievable.”
  - [\*Reports Warn of Shortages of Protective Gear for Medical Workers\*](#), July 6
    - Rear Admiral Polowczyk, leader of coronavirus-related supplies for the White House, recently told Congress that more than 25% of states have less than a 30-day supply of personal protective equipment (PPE).
    - The Associated Press [analyzed](#) FEMA distributions of PPE and found that low-population, mostly rural states received the largest allocations per confirmed case. States including California, Iowa, and Nebraska, all of which have seen a surge in confirmed infections, received among the lowest amounts of protective gear per case from FEMA.
    - New York Representative Maloney released a [memo](#) raising concerns about looming problems in the supply chain based on interviews with employees at medical supply

companies, one of whom warned that raw material for gowns is not available at any price in the amounts needed, leading to an “unsustainable” situation.

- The American Medical Association wrote a [letter](#) to FEMA, Vice President Pence, and members of Congress calling for a coordinated national strategy to buy and allocate gear.
  
- [\*The Disproportionate Impact of COVID-19 on Communities of Color\*](#), July 6
  - The New York Times obtained a federal database of confirmed COVID-19 cases and their demographic information after filing a Freedom of Information Act suit against CDC.
  - The Times measured racial disparities across 974 counties, which account for about 55% of the nation’s population. Infection and death rates were calculated by grouping cases in the CDC data by race, ethnicity, and age group, and comparing the totals with the most recent Census Bureau population estimates for each county.
  - The study found that Black and Hispanic people are three times as likely as white people in the same counties to become infected with SARS-CoV-2. Black and Hispanic people are almost twice as likely to die from the illness. The racial differences were found across rural, suburban, and urban areas.
  
- [\*FDA COVID-19 Update: Daily Roundup\*](#), July 6
  - FDA updated [guidance](#) on how to obtain informed consent from prospective clinical trial participants during the pandemic.
  - FDA [issued](#) an emergency use authorization (EUA) for a second COVID-19 antigen test. Antigen tests detect fragments of proteins found on or within the virus by testing nasal swab samples. Antigen tests may not detect all active infections, but can provide results in minutes and be produced at a lower cost than molecular tests. FDA noted that antigen tests could potentially scale to test millions of Americans per day once multiple manufacturers enter the market.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [Key Considerations for COVID-19 Emergency Triage Policies in Illinois](#), July 6

Send questions to:

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- [COVID-19RecoveryPolicies@ropesgray.com](mailto:COVID-19RecoveryPolicies@ropesgray.com)