

COVID-19 Daily Update

July 9, 2020

Summary

The United States has 3,077,985 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 132,570 reported related deaths. Dr. Fauci commented that the number of virus cases is “exponentially” growing in several states. Fauci recommended that any state with “a serious problem... should seriously look at shutting down.” Department of Labor reported that another 1,314,000 workers filed initial claims for unemployment benefits last week. WHO formally acknowledged that droplets carrying the coronavirus may be airborne indoors and that people who spend long periods in crowded settings with inadequate ventilation may be at risk of becoming infected. WHO continues to emphasize that the virus is spread primarily through larger droplets that are coughed or inhaled. Vice President Pence stated that “it’s time for us to get our kids back to school.” CDC plans to issue additional recommendations next week on re-opening schools in the fall to supplement its existing guidance.

Some medical facilities across the nation are again facing a dire shortage of respirator masks, isolation gowns, and disposable gloves that protect front-line medical workers from infection. Doctors in Houston treating COVID-19 patients have been told to reuse single-use N95 respirator masks for up to 15 days. In Florida, some hospitals are providing workers with loose-fitting surgical masks to treat newly admitted patients who may be asymptomatic carriers of the virus. Ivy League presidents placed all sports on hold until at least January, marking the first Division I conference that will not play football in the fall. American Airlines and United Airlines temporarily suspended service to Hong Kong after local health officials announced mandatory COVID-19 testing for all crew upon arrival. In Florida, Palm Beach County officials opted to continue online classes for the district in the fall, despite a State mandate to open schools, stating that “we’re not ready from a health standpoint.”

New York reported 11 deaths, 851 hospitalizations, and 173 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Thursday, July 9. Approximately 0.8% of the 65,564 tests conducted in New York on July 8 were positive for COVID-19. New York State United Teachers issued a statement urging the State to adopt health and safety protocols when re-opening area schools. The Union called on leaders to prioritize “equitable access to a high-quality education” for all students. The City intends to ramp up COVID-19 testing across the area, with a goal of testing 150,000 residents over the next week. Metropolitan Transit Authority launched an initiative in partnership with other transit agencies in the area, seeking technology proposals to improve the transit safety during the pandemic. MTA is most interested in finding a way to eliminate contaminated aerosols from the public transit system. Manhattan’s residential vacancy rates are at 3.67%, their highest level in 14 years. New lease signings are at the lowest level in nearly a decade.

Presidential updates

- [Press Briefing by Vice President Pence and Members of the Coronavirus Task Force](#), July 8
 - The White House coronavirus task force held a press briefing on Wednesday, July 8.
 - Vice President Pence noted that the percentage of positive tests, an early indicator of the trajectory of the outbreak, has shown signs of “flattening” in Arizona, Florida, and Texas.
 - Dr. Birx urged residents in Florida, Arizona, California, and Texas, to “stop going to bars ... and [to] decrease any kind of indoor gatherings ... down to our phase one recommendation” of 10 people or less.
 - Education Secretary DeVos commented that “education leaders need to examine real data for their own states and communities and weigh the risks” of re-opening schools. DeVos urged leaders to consider the following factors in their decision: physical health and safety; mental health; social emotional development; and lost opportunities for students.
- [President Trump Campaign Rally Faces Pushback](#), July 8
 - President Trump plans to hold a campaign rally in an airport hangar in Portsmouth, New Hampshire on Saturday, July 11.
 - The event will be held partially outdoors and organizers have “strongly” encouraged attendees to wear face coverings.
 - New Hampshire Governor Sununu will not attend and stated that “I’m not going to put myself in the middle of a crowd of thousands of people.”
 - Former New Hampshire Attorney General Rath commented that the rally is “not what [the state] need[s] right now in terms of COVID-19 ... we have been very, very fortunate [that] our number of deaths are quite small.”

World Health Organization (WHO)

- [WHO Updates Transmission of COVID-19 Guidance](#), July 8
 - WHO published a scientific [brief](#) outlining WHO’s current understanding of how COVID-19 spreads and acknowledging emerging evidence of the airborne transmission of the virus in “crowded indoor spaces.”
 - WHO stated that transmission of the virus by aerosols may have contributed to outbreaks of COVID-19 in crowded indoor spaces, including restaurants, nightclubs, places of worship, and fitness classes.
 - WHO noted that current evidence suggests that virus transmission occurs “primarily between people through direct, indirect, or close contact with infected people through infected secretions such as saliva and respiratory droplets.” WHO noted that transmission may also take place through contact with a contaminated surface, also known as “fomite transmission.”
 - Urgent high-quality research is needed to elucidate the relative importance of different virus transmission routes, including: (1) the role of airborne transmission in the absence of aerosol generating procedures, such as intubation and extubation; (2) the dose of virus required for transmission to occur; (3) the settings and risk factors for super spreading events; and (4) the extent of asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic transmission.

- [COVID-19 Situation Report – 170](#), July 7
 - WHO experts plan to [travel](#) to China to determine the scope and terms of reference for an official WHO mission to identify the zoonotic source of SARS-CoV-2.
 - WHO Director-General Tedros, [stated](#) that “the greatest threat we face now is not the virus itself. Rather it is the lack of leadership and solidarity at the global and national levels.”
 - Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Director Etienne, [expressed](#) the need to protect medical personnel from COVID-19 and called on leaders to “let evidence guide their actions” as they continue to respond to the pandemic.

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

- [Report on the Effectiveness of Cloth Masks for Protection Against COVID-19](#), July 9
 - A study, published by CDC as an early release, analyzed available data on the effectiveness of cloth face masks to protect the wearer from contracting COVID-19.
 - CDC notes that the filtration effectiveness of cloth masks is generally lower than that of medical masks, but that cloth masks may provide some protection if well designed and used correctly.
 - Filtration effectiveness of cloth masks depends on many factors. Current evidence suggests that multi-layered masks with water-resistant fabric, a high thread count, and finer weave may be more protective. Masks made of cotton and towel material provide better protection than masks made of gauze. One study found that the use of nylon stockings around the mask improved filtration.
 - Cloth masks should be washed daily and after high-exposure use with soap and water.

New York State

- [New York State COVID-19 Updates](#), July 9
 - New York reported 11 deaths, 851 hospitalizations, and 173 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Thursday, July 9.
 - Approximately .8% of the 65,564 tests conducted in New York on July 8 were positive for COVID-19.
 - Governor Cuomo [commented](#) on President Trump’s recent remarks urging governors to re-open schools in the fall. Cuomo stated that “to be clear, the federal government has no legal authority when it comes to school openings.” Cuomo asserted that New York will “get the data and we’ll make that decision in August.”
- [New York State Teachers Union Issues Statement on Re-Opening Schools](#), July 9
 - New York State United Teachers President Andy Pallotta released a [statement](#) regarding the re-opening of schools this fall.
 - The statement urges the State to address the following school-related issues: (1) school districts must have personal protective equipment available for every student and staff member; (2) schools must develop cleaning and disinfecting protocols; (3) six feet of social distancing must be observed in school buildings; (4) schools must make accommodations for high-risk students and staff; (5) mental health services must be available for all students; and (6) every student must have access to a well-rounded education, regardless of re-opening.

New York City

- [Mayor de Blasio Kicks Off COVID-19 Testing Day of Action](#), July 8
 - The City intends to ramp up COVID-19 testing across the area, with plans to test 150,000 residents over the next week. Mayor de Blasio kicked off the initiative on July 8, describing Wednesday as a “COVID-19 day of action.”
 - Mayor de Blasio called on all New Yorkers to recognize that being tested for COVID-19 is “a civic duty to your fellow New Yorkers.”
 - In addition to diagnostic tests, free, walk-in antibody testing is available at Health + Hospitals Gotham Community Health Centers. New Yorkers can also obtain a free antibody test through a partnership BioReference labs through Friday, July 24.
- [New York Rents Fall as Vacancies Rise](#), July 9
 - Manhattan’s residential vacancy rates are at 3.67%, their highest level in 14 years. New lease signings are at the lowest level in nearly a decade.
 - Median rental prices are 4.8% lower compared to June 2019. Real estate companies in New York commented that the pandemic has been a “shock to the system” and noted that “the market has yet to reset itself.”
 - As apartments remain vacant, it is unclear what will happen with the excess inventory. The most significant price drops are at the top of the market for larger, luxury apartments; some view this as an indication that wealthy renters, who tend to be more mobile, are staying away from the city.
- [MTA Launches COVID-19 Response Challenge](#), July 9
 - Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) launched the [COVID-19 Response Challenge](#) in partnership with New York City Department of Transportation, New Jersey Transit, and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.
 - The agencies called on the private tech industry to submit proposals that address critical pandemic-related health and safety objectives for the area’s transit system.
 - MTA seeks technologies that can safely reduce or eliminate contaminated aerosols from MTA’s public transit system. Other agencies seek a broader set of solutions including thermal monitoring tools to measure body temperature, tools to measure and mitigate crowding in shared spaces, and contactless fare card machines.
 - Companies that submit proposals deemed promising by transit, tech, and health sector evaluators may have the opportunity to implement their technology. Proposals must be submitted for consideration by July 30.

Other Related Updates

- [Department of Labor Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims Report](#), July 9
 - Department of Labor (DOL) reports that another 1,314,000 workers filed initial claims for unemployment benefits last week.
 - More than 48 million workers have filed for unemployment benefits over the last sixteen weeks. Initial applications for unemployment insurance have steadily declined for several months, from a record 6.9 million claims in late March.
 - 1,038,905 new claims were filed for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, the federal program intended to help freelancers, gig workers, the self-employed, and others not normally eligible for state jobless benefits.

- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) issued a new [report](#), projecting that the average unemployment rate across 37 OECD countries will reach 9.7% by the end of 2020, up from 5.3% in 2019. Full job recovery is not expected until after 2021.
- OECD found that women have been affected more adversely than men by the pandemic. Women make up the majority of the workforce in heavily affected sectors, including health care and retail, and disproportionately hold less secure jobs. Women's unpaid work burdens were amplified by widespread closings of schools and child care facilities.
- [CDC to Issue Additional Re-Opening Guidance for Schools](#), July 9
 - President Trump recently criticized CDC guidance on re-opening school as “expensive” and “impractical.” The President threatened to “cut off funding” for schools that do not re-open in the fall.
 - Vice President Pence announced that CDC will issue additional recommendations on school re-openings next week. Pence commented that “we just don’t want the guidance to be too tough” and promised “five different documents that will be giving even more clarity on the guidance going forward.”
 - CDC Director Redfield [clarified](#) that “it’s not a revision of the guidelines, it’s just to provide additional information to help schools be able to use the guidance that we put forward.”
 - An administration official confirmed that the new guidance has been under development for weeks but has yet to be cleared by top CDC or taskforce officials. The official denied that any White House official pressured the agency to ease the existing school guidelines issued in April.
- [Proposed Strategies to Resume Routine Health Care](#), July 9
 - An article in the New England Journal of Medicine asserted that strategies to re-open health care must account for human psychology and address patient fear.
 - Nearly 30% of individuals reported actively avoiding or delaying care during the pandemic due to concerns about contracting the virus.
 - The article encourages health care leaders and clinicians to draw upon behavioral principles to counteract fear and suboptimal health behaviors, such as framing information about COVID-19-related risks in a balanced fashion.
 - For example, though the risk/ benefit trade-off of a procedure does not change whether risk is framed as a 30% chance of death or a 70% chance of survival, patient choices can differ based on which framing is chosen.
 - In the case of pediatric vaccination, health care systems could use framing to temper parents’ COVID-19 fears (e.g., by framing the high probability of a child’s good outcomes after COVID-19 infection) and underscore the risks of forgoing other vaccinations (e.g., by framing the high risk of bad outcomes after contracting those infections).

- [*FDA COVID-19 Update: Daily Roundup*](#), July 8
 - FDA issued a [warning letter](#) to one company for selling fraudulent COVID-19 products.
 - FDA highlighted the federal [prosecution](#) of four Florida residents for marketing a toxic bleach solution as a cure for COVID-19. The individuals charged encouraged people to orally ingest the solution and, were charged with conspiracy to violate the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, among other offenses.

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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