

COVID-19 Daily Update

June 21, 2020

Summary

The United States has 2,268,093 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 119,868 reported related deaths. CDC consolidated data from 21 models projecting the COVID-19 death rate; CDC national forecasts suggest that the number of cumulative COVID-19 deaths will be between 129,000 and 145,000 by July 11. A federal review, conducted by two Department of Health and Human Services lawyers, found that CDC's early COVID-19 test kits failed because of "likely" contamination. National Institutes of Health terminated its clinical trial of hydroxychloroquine after the study's data and safety monitoring board determined that the drug "was very unlikely to be beneficial to hospitalized patients with COVID-19." China halted the import of poultry from a Tyson Foods plant in Arkansas following an outbreak of COVID-19 cases at the facility. Tysons issued a statement asserting that "WHO, CDC, USDA and FDA agree that there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with food."

Reported COVID-19 cases are rising in 18 states across the South, West and Midwest. The United States reported more than 30,000 new infections on both June 19 and June 20, its highest totals since May 1. Cruise Lines International Association announced that all major cruise lines agreed to extend the suspension of U.S. operations through September 15. AMC Theatres, the nation's largest multiplex operator, released a detailed plan to open 450 of its 600 U.S. theaters on July 15; AMC will reduce personal contact at concession stands and box offices, require masks for all attendees, and cap seating at 30% while gradually increasing seating to full capacity by Thanksgiving. Apple announced that it will close 11 stores in four states in which coronavirus infections are surging, including Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Arizona. The decision comes just weeks after the company re-opened those locations.

New York reported 24 deaths on Friday, June 19. Approximately 716, or 1%, of the 68,830 tests conducted in New York on June 19 were positive for COVID-19. The State plans to issue guidance to colleges and universities to allow some in person instruction and on-campus housing for the fall semester. New York City will enter phase two of its re-opening on Monday, June 22. Mayor de Blasio released guidance for the City's Open Restaurants program, which will allow qualifying restaurants and bars to expand outdoor seating during phase two. Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, which is home the Metropolitan Opera, the New York Philharmonic, and New York City Ballet, cancelled performances through the end of 2020. The Yankees and Mets will hold spring training in New York in their respective stadiums. After 111 consecutive daily press conferences, Governor Cuomo held his final daily press conference on COVID-19 on Friday, June 19. The change reflects the steep decline in infections and hospitalization rates in New York. The Governor still plans to provide periodic updates on COVID-19.

Presidential updates

- [*President Trump Comments on COVID-19 During Rally in Oklahoma*](#), June 20
 - President Trump held his first campaign rally since the beginning of the pandemic on Saturday, June 20, in Tulsa Oklahoma.
 - At least one-third of the 19,000 seat arena was empty. President Trump attributed the low turnout in part to news media reports on health concerns associated with the indoor rally.
 - President Trump reiterated concerns that more testing in the U.S. led to an increase in confirmed cases that “in many ways, it makes us look bad.” President Trump stated that he asked his “people” to “slow the testing down, please.”
 - Peter Navarro, the White House director of trade and manufacturing policy, stated that the President’s comment about slowing testing was “tongue in cheek.”
 - President Trump is set to deliver his national convention speech on August 27 in Jacksonville, Florida inside an arena that holds 15,000 people. According to model [projections](#), Florida “has the makings of the next large epicenter.” Florida’s Department of Health issued an advisory over the weekend encouraging social distancing and mask use. Florida Governor DeSantis acknowledged that the surging cases in Florida are not solely the result of expanded testing.
- [*White House Acknowledges Preparing for Fall COVID-19 Wave*](#), June 21
 - Peter Navarro, the White House director of trade and manufacturing policy, announced that the White House is working to prepare for the possibility of a second wave of COVID-19 in the fall by “filling the stockpile” and “doing everything we can.”

World Health Organization (WHO)

- [*WHO COVID-19 Situation Report – 152*](#), June 20
 - WHO [published](#) an emergency global supply chain system catalogue, which lists the medical devices that may be requested through the COVID-19 Supply Portal, including personal protective equipment, medical equipment, medical consumables, single use devices, laboratory, and test-related devices.
 - WHO [noted](#) that Europe accounts for 31% of COVID-19 cases and 43% of related deaths globally. WHO warned that school re-openings in a few countries have resulted in local spikes in COVID-19 cases. In the past month the number of European countries showing significant increases in cumulative incidence has more than tripled, from six to 21 countries.
 - WHO issued [guidance](#) on addressing violence against women, children, and older people during the pandemic.

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

- [*Guidance on COVID-19 and Food*](#), June 20
 - CDC issued guidance on food safety practices during the pandemic.
 - CDC noted that “the risk of getting COVID-19 from food or food packaging is very low.” Currently, no cases of COVID-19 have been identified where the infection occurred by touching food, food packaging, or shopping bags. The virus that causes COVID-19 has not been found in drinking water.

- CDC cautions against using disinfectants designed for hard surfaces, such as bleach or ammonia, on food packaged in cardboard or plastic wrap. Produce should not be washed with soap, bleach, sanitizer, alcohol, disinfectant, or any other chemical. Instead, fresh fruits and vegetables should be rinsed under cold, running tap water.
- [*Federal Review of CDC COVID-19 Test Kits*](#), June 20
 - A federal review, conducted by two Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) lawyers, found that CDC’s early COVID-19 test kits failed because of “likely” contamination at CDC’s headquarters in Atlanta.
 - The review was based on interviews “with nine CDC employees and contractors who were involved in the production of the test kits.”
 - The review found that CDC scientists did not thoroughly check the kits despite “anomalies” during manufacturing. HHS noted that there was “time pressure” at CDC to launch testing, and “lab practices... may have been insufficient to prevent the risk of contamination.”
 - The contamination “most likely” occurred in CDC’s Respiratory Virus Diagnostic Lab, during its processing and testing of the materials produced by the core lab. Neither the review nor an accompanying statement from HHS assigned blame to any CDC scientist or official by name.
 - A separate audit of CDC’s handling of the test kits remains underway by the HHS Office of Inspector General and is not expected to be completed until 2021.
- [*Interpretation of COVID-19 Death Forecasts*](#), June 19
 - CDC consolidated data from 21 models projecting the COVID-19 death rate. Predicted rates of increase differ among the forecasts, depending on assumptions about the prevalence and rigor of social distancing behaviors.
 - National forecasts suggest that the number of cumulative COVID-19 deaths will be between 129,000 and 145,000 by July 11. State-level forecasts indicate that the number of new deaths will increase in Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Hawaii, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, and Utah. For other states, the number of new deaths is expected to be similar or decrease slightly compared to the previous four weeks.
- [*COVIDView Weekly Surveillance Summary of U.S. COVID-19 Activity*](#), June 19
 - CDC summarized key COVID-19 disease indicators for the week ending June 13.
 - The national percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for COVID-19 increased slightly from the previous week from 6.1% to 6.4%. The national increase was driven by increases in five surveillance regions: the northeast, southeast, south central, central, and pacific northwest.
 - The overall cumulative hospitalization rate is 94.5 per 100,000, with the highest rates in people 65 years and older (286.9 per 100,000) and 50-64 years (143 per 100,000).
 - Based on death certificate data, the percentage of total deaths attributed to pneumonia, influenza, or COVID-19 decreased from 11.4% to 7.1% from the prior week, but remained above baseline.

New York State

- [*New York State COVID-19 Updates*](#), June 20
 - After 111 consecutive daily press conferences, Governor Cuomo held his final daily press conference on COVID-19 on Friday, June 19. A full transcript is available [here](#).
 - The change reflects the steep decline in infections and hospitalization rates in New York. The Governor still plans to provide periodic updates on COVID-19, and the State regularly updates its COVID-19 [data page](#).
 - New York reported 24 deaths on Friday, June 19. Approximately 716, or 1%, of the 68,830 tests conducted in New York on June 19 were positive for COVID-19.
 - New York City will enter phase two of its re-opening on Monday, June 22. Business guidance for phase two is available [here](#).
 - The Mid-Hudson region remains on track to enter phase three on Tuesday, June 23.
 - The Yankees and Mets will hold spring training in New York in their respective stadiums. The Mets will host a soft opening this week for players who want to begin preparing.
 - New York plans to issue guidance to colleges and universities to allow some in person instruction and on-campus housing for the fall semester. Campuses must develop a plan to meet the guidance, and file the plan with the State.

New York City

- [*Mayor de Blasio Announces Outdoor Dining Guidance for Restaurants*](#), June 18
 - Mayor de Blasio released guidance for the City's Open Restaurants program, which allow qualifying restaurants and bars to expand outdoor seating on sidewalks, curb lanes, backyards, patios, and plazas during phase two of re-opening.
 - Restaurants must provide their own tables, chairs and traffic barriers. Customers are not permitted to gather outside of establishments; businesses that repeatedly fail to comply will have their Open Restaurant authorization revoked by Department of Transportation, and will be referred to the State Liquor Authority.
 - Sidewalk seating will be in effect until the end of October. Curb lane seating will last through Labor Day.
 - The City established an expedited approval processes, allowing restaurants and bars to self-certify their eligibility for curb lane and sidewalk seating using a new, streamlined application process.
 - Mayor de Blasio commented that "restaurants are the backbone of New York City's neighborhood culture" and expressed his commitment to helping restaurants re-open "safely and responsibly."

Other Related Updates

- [*NIH Halts Clinical Trial of Hydroxychloroquine*](#), June 20
 - National Institutes of Health (NIH) halted its clinical trial of hydroxychloroquine.
 - Study participants were randomly assigned to receive 400 mg of hydroxychloroquine twice daily for two doses (day one), then 200 mg twice daily for the subsequent eight doses (days two to five) or a placebo twice daily for five days.
 - The data from this study indicated that hydroxychloroquine provided no additional benefit compared to placebo control for the treatment of COVID-19 in hospitalized patients.

- The study’s data and safety monitoring board determined that hydroxychloroquine “was very unlikely to be beneficial to hospitalized patients with COVID-19.”
- Participants in the study will continue to receive standard of care and follow up as indicated for their condition.
- [*China Temporarily Halts Some Imports of Tyson Foods Poultry*](#), June 21
 - China halted the import of poultry from a Tyson Foods plant in Arkansas following an outbreak of coronavirus cases at the facility.
 - 481 employees, or 13% of the plant’s 3,748 employees, tested positive for COVID-19 earlier this month. Tyson reports that 455 of the 481 employees that tested positive (95%) were asymptomatic.
 - China’s General Administration of Customs office announced that shipments from the plant would be temporarily suspended, while products that have already arrived will be seized.
 - Tyson released a statement saying that it was “looking into” China’s action, noting that it operated in compliance with all government safety requirements. Tysons stated that “WHO, CDC, USDA and FDA agree that there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with food.”
- [*Department of Labor Issues Guidance for Non-Essential Businesses*](#), June 18
 - Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued [guidance](#) on how to re-open non-essential businesses during the pandemic.
 - OSHA urges employers to focus on the strategies for basic hygiene, social distancing, identification and isolation of sick employees, workplace controls and flexibilities, and employee training, during each phase of the re-opening process.
- [*IRS Offers Relief for Retirement Plan Participants Affected by COVID-19*](#), June 19
 - Internal Revenue Service (IRS) released a [notice](#) to guide retirement plan participants affected by COVID-19.
 - The guidance relates to Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provisions which provide enhanced access to retirement plan distributions and loans.
 - IRS expanded the categories of individuals eligible for these types of distributions and loans (referred to as “qualified individuals”) and provided guidance on how qualified individuals should reflect the tax treatment of these distributions and loans on their federal income tax filings.
- [*State Department Announces COVID-19 Humanitarian Grants*](#), June 19
 - State Department announced \$93 million in new humanitarian aid to assist the COVID-19 response.
 - \$75 million, for the International Disaster Assistance account, will support emergency health, water, sanitation, hygiene, and food assistance to address the secondary impacts of the pandemic.
 - \$18 million, for the Migration and Refugee Assistance account, will enhance the ability of international and non-governmental organization partners to provide livelihood support, psychosocial services, food security, and access to health services for refugees, vulnerable migrants, and host communities.

- To date, State Department and USAID have provided more than \$1.3 billion in health, humanitarian, and economic assistance related to the pandemic.
- [FDA COVID-19 Update: Daily Roundup](#), June 19
 - FDA [highlighted](#) its partnership with National Institutes of Health (NIH), Veterans Administration (VA), and America Makes to support non-traditional manufacturing approaches to address device shortages including personal protective equipment (PPE).
 - FDA [posted](#) 3D-printable designs for COVID-19 devices on its 3D Print Exchange.
 - FDA updated [guidance](#) for pharmaceutical manufacturers on actions to take when an employee who has been directly involved in manufacturing drugs has a confirmed infection of COVID-19, symptoms of COVID-19, or has been exposed to an infected person.
 - The FDA issued a [warning letter](#) to one company for selling a cannabidiol (CBD) product with misleading claims that it can prevent, treat, or cure COVID-19.
 - FDA, CDC, and Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA), will host a [webinar](#) on importing respirators for health care personnel use during the pandemic, on Tuesday, June 23.
 - FDA announced its [participation](#) in the COVID-19 Diagnostics Evidence Accelerator, a multi-stakeholder collaborative project to advance the development of COVID-19 diagnostics.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [Challenges of “Return to Work” in an Ongoing Pandemic](#), June 18
- [2021 Medicare Parts C and D Final Rule: Enhancing Coverage for ESRD and Easing Network and MLR Standards](#), June 17
- [4 Telehealth Concerns For Care Management After COVID-19](#), June 16
- [Anti-Corruption in Brazil During COVID-19: A Conversation with Officials from the Federal Prosecution Service and the Brazilian Office of the Comptroller General](#), June 16

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