

COVID-19 Daily Update

May 22, 2020

Summary

The United States has 1,588,322 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 95,276 reported related deaths. President Trump ordered all federal buildings and monuments to fly the American flag at half-staff over the weekend to honor those who have died from COVID-19. Dr. Fauci expressed that “now is the time... to begin to seriously look at re-opening the economy... to try to get back to some degree of normal.” CDC consolidated data from 16 models projecting the COVID-19 death rate; all models indicate an increase in national COVID-19 deaths in the coming weeks and suggest that the United States will reach 110,000 deaths by June 13. CDC noted that the “current best estimate” is that 35% of positive COVID-19 cases are asymptomatic. WHO and UNICEF issued a joint statement warning that, due to the disruption of routine immunization services during the pandemic, 80 million children under the age of one are at risk of contracting deadly, vaccine-preventable diseases, including measles, polio, and cholera.

More than 1,200 pastors in California signed a declaration to protest Governor Newsom’s restrictions on in-person worship services. The pastors pledged to re-open their churches on May 31 or sooner, even if state restrictions are not lifted. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, will re-open this weekend, becoming the first major arts institution in the country to resume operations. Legoland and Universal Studios received preliminary approval to re-open their Florida theme parks in June. Both parks will limit capacity, conduct temperature checks, and allow contactless ordering at restaurants. Facebook announced that it expects as many as half of the company’s more than 48,000 employees to work remotely within the next decade. Twitter and Square, the payments company, recently told employees that they can work from home indefinitely. Britain plans to require all travelers flying into the country, including citizens, to self-isolate for 14 days, beginning on June 8. Those who violate self-isolation rules will be fined at least \$1,200.

New York reported 109 deaths on Friday, May 22. Governor Cuomo announced that Long Island and the Mid-Hudson region could begin re-opening next week, if the number of virus-related deaths continues to decline and local officials increase the number of contact tracers. Rockland County is now eligible to resume elective surgeries and ambulatory care. New York State extended the State sales tax filing deadline for small businesses to June 22. Mayor de Blasio noted that New York City will not re-open until it has a 10 to 14 day period with: under 200 new COVID-19 hospitalizations; fewer than 375 COVID-19 patients in public hospital intensive care units; and fewer than 15% of City residents testing positive for the virus. The City has met the threshold for hospital admissions and positive tests, but still has 451 COVID-19 patients in intensive care. New York City now reports 89 confirmed cases of multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) associated with COVID-19.

Presidential updates

- [Presidential Proclamation on Honoring the Victims of the Pandemic](#), May 22
 - President Trump issued a proclamation ordering all federal buildings and monuments to fly the American flag at half-staff from Friday, May 22, until sunset on May 24, “as a mark of solemn respect for the victims of the coronavirus pandemic.”
 - The proclamation came after Democratic leaders in the House and Senate asked President Trump to lower the flags when the country reaches 100,000 virus-related deaths, “to serve as a national expression of grief.”
- [Remarks by President Trump at Ford Components Plant in Michigan](#), May 21
 - President Trump visited a Ford Plant in Ypsilanti, Michigan on Thursday, May 21; the plant has been re-purposed to produce ventilators.
 - President Trump [stated](#) that “a permanent lockdown is not a strategy for a healthy state or a healthy country.” President Trump later asserted that he will “not close the country” in the event of a second wave of COVID-19.
 - President Trump refused to wear a mask during the public portion of the tour and when making remarks before members of the press and Ford representatives. The President stated that it was “not necessary” because “everybody’s been tested, I’ve been tested.” The President added that he “didn’t want to give the press the pleasure of seeing” him wearing a mask.
 - The Ford factory’s guidelines, CDC recommendations, and Michigan state orders provide that individuals should wear masks when in similar, public situations.

World Health Organization (WHO)

- [WHO and UNICEF Issue Joint Statement on Routine Vaccination Disruptions During the Pandemic](#), May 22
 - WHO and UNICEF issued a joint statement that the pandemic has substantially hindered the provision of routine immunization services in 68 countries. The organizations warn that 80 million children under the age of one are at risk of contracting deadly, vaccine-preventable diseases, including measles, polio, and cholera.
- [WHO Launches New Search Feature for COVID-19 Questions](#), May 22
 - WHO’s COVID-19 [webpage](#) now features an enhanced natural language processing search bar to more accurately answer questions on COVID-19.

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

- [Interpretation of COVID-19 Death Forecasts](#), May 21
 - CDC consolidated data from 16 models projecting the COVID-19 death rate. All 16 models indicate an increase in national COVID-19 deaths in the coming weeks. 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 reported deaths is likely to exceed 110,000 by June 13. State-level forecasts indicate that states with low numbers of deaths reported to date are not likely to see a rapid rise in the coming weeks, while

states with high numbers of deaths reported to date are likely to see substantial increases.

- [COVID-19 Pandemic Planning Scenarios](#), May 21
 - CDC issued guidance to help public health officials evaluate the potential effects of different community mitigation strategies.
 - CDC noted that the “current best estimate” is that 35% of positive COVID-19 cases are asymptomatic. CDC cautions that this number could change as more data becomes available.
- [CDC Expected to Release Guidance on Re-Opening Places of Worship](#), May 22
 - CDC plans to release new guidance on the re-opening of churches and other places of worship after facing push back from federal officials.
 - An administration official [described](#) CDC’s initial guidelines as “more draconian and less optimistic” than the White House wanted. President Trump recently stated that he considers houses of worship to be “essential” and that he wants them to re-open.

New York State

- [Governor Cuomo Holds Daily COVID-19 Press Conference](#), May 22
 - New York reported 109 deaths on Friday, May 22, marking the fifth straight day that fatalities were just above 100.
 - Long Island and the Mid-Hudson region met five out of seven of the State’s re-opening metrics. Governor Cuomo announced that both regions could begin re-opening next week if the number of virus-related deaths continues to decline and local officials increase the number of contact tracers. In anticipation of a potential re-opening, Governor Cuomo will immediately allow construction companies to begin staging building sites.
 - New York announced a pilot program to partner with 52 independent pharmacies to conduct 7,000 COVID-19 tests per week. According to Governor Cuomo, New York has performed more tests per capita than any other state or country.
- [New York State COVID-19 Updates](#), May 21
 - New York State extended the State sales tax filing deadline for small businesses to June 22; the deadline was previously extended from March 20 to May 19. The extension provides relief to 89,000 eligible vendors with taxable receipts of less than \$300,000 in the previous quarter.
 - Rockland County is now eligible to resume elective surgeries and ambulatory care. New York has allowed elective surgeries to resume in 51 counties “without a significant risk of a COVID-19 surge in the near term.”
 - Governor Cuomo encouraged New Yorkers to call the State’s Coronavirus Hotline to report their employers’ failure to follow personal protective equipment, hygiene, or social distancing guidelines.

New York City

- [Mayor de Blasio Holds Media Availability on COVID-19](#), May 21
 - Mayor de Blasio warned New Yorkers not to take mass transit to the beach. De Blasio stated that, for now, beaches are intended only for those who live in close proximity. The City plans to dispatch hundreds of officers this weekend to enforce social distancing restrictions on the beach.
 - De Blasio announced that City lifeguards have been called into pools for their annual testing and training. De Blasio declined to give a re-opening date for City beaches. The executive director of the lifeguard’s union commented that lifeguards are “being trained to get ready to open the beach early in June.”
 - The Mayor noted that New York City will not re-open until it has a 10 to 14 day period with: under 200 new COVID-19 hospitalizations; fewer than 375 COVID-19 patients in public hospital intensive care units; and fewer than 15% of City residents testing positive for the virus. The City has met the threshold for total hospital admissions and positive tests, but still has 451 COVID-19 patients in intensive care units.
- [New York City Reports at Least 89 Cases of Multi-System Inflammatory Syndrome in Children](#), May 21
 - New York City Department of Health (NYCDOH) reports 89 confirmed cases of multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) associated with COVID-19. 158 cases of suspected MIS-C were reported to NYCDOH; 26 did not meet CDC’s syndrome criteria and 43 are still under investigation.
 - Common symptoms of MIS-C include fever, irritability or sluggishness, abdominal pain, diarrhea, vomiting, rash, red or pink eyes, enlarged lymph nodes on one side of the neck, red cracked lips, or swollen hands and feet.
- [New York City Announces Programs for Domestic Violence and Food Security](#), May 21
 - New York City’s Emergency Food Delivery [program](#) will now deliver over 1 million meals per day, in addition to the City’s school grab-and-go program, which serves over 500,000 meals per day. Mayor de Blasio commented that “we are laser focused on ensuring no New Yorker goes hungry.” The City has provided more than 32 million meals since the beginning of the pandemic.
 - The City announced an emergency financial relief [program](#) to meet the immediate safety, economic, and housing needs of domestic violence survivors affected by the pandemic.
- [City Health Department COVID-19 Guidance Documents](#), May 21
 - NYCDOH updated its [fact sheet](#) on sex and COVID-19.
 - NYCDOH issued [guidance](#) on best practices to provide access to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and emergency post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) to prevent HIV during the pandemic.

Other Related Updates

- [Dr. Fauci Comments on COVID-19 During Media Appearance](#), May 22
 - White House health adviser Dr. Fauci stated that it is “conceivable” that the United States could roll out a COVID-19 vaccine by December but added that any timeline is “never a promise.”
 - Fauci stated that imposing stay-at-home orders for too long could cause “irreparable damage.” Fauci expressed that “now is the time... to begin to seriously look at re-opening the economy [and] re-opening the country to try to get back to some degree of normal.”
 - Fauci noted that states must still take “very significant precautions” and warned against reducing social distancing measures too quickly. Fauci expressed his belief that “most of the country is doing it in a prudent way.”
 - Last week, Dr. Fauci testified before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and warned that the re-opening too quickly would cause even more “suffering and death” and hinder states “on the road to... an economic recovery.”

- [FDA Update on COVID-19 Antibody Tests](#), May 21
 - On March 16, FDA stated that it would not object to the development and use of antibody tests by laboratories or commercial manufacturers without FDA review or authorization so long as the tests were validated and FDA was notified before a company marketed its test.
 - Following reports questioning the accuracy of some of the antibody tests on the market, FDA [revised](#) its antibody testing policy on May 4 to require commercial manufacturers to submit an emergency use authorization (EUA) within 10 business days of the new policy with validation data in order to continue marketing the test.
 - FDA recently posted a [list](#) of commercial manufacturers that have either failed to submit an emergency use authorization (EUA) request or voluntarily withdrew their antibody test distributed under FDA’s former policy.

- [Analysis of Hydroxychloroquine for the Treatment of COVID-19](#), May 21
 - An observational study, published in the Lancet, analyzed the use of hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine for the treatment of COVID-19.
 - Researchers examined the records of 96,032 COVID-19 cases from 671 hospitals around the world. The study compared the patient outcomes of 15,000 patients who received hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine, with 81,000 patients who did not.
 - The drugs were “associated with no evidence of [clinical] benefit” but were associated with an increased risk of harm. People who received the drugs had a 137% increased risk of developing serious heart arrhythmia and a 34% higher risk of death, than those who were not treated with it.
 - The study concluded “that these drug regimens should not be used outside of clinical trials and urgent confirmation from randomized clinical trial is needed.”

- [Labor Department Investigated Violations of the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act](#), May 21
 - Department of Labor (DOL) investigated two violations of the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act (EPSLA) under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA).

- EPSLA provides eligible employees with paid leave to care for the employee's own health needs or to care for family members.
- DOL found the [U.S. Postal Service](#) (USPS) in San Jose, California and an [Arizona school district](#) liable for back wages for failing to provide sick leave benefits for employees caring for children whose schools were closed due to COVID-19.
- [*Pulmonary Vascular Endothelialitis, Thrombosis, and Angiogenesis in COVID-19*](#), May 21
 - A recent study, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, examined the morphologic and molecular changes in the lungs of deceased COVID-19 patients.
 - Researchers compared lung samples of seven patients who died from COVID-19 with: (1) lung samples from seven patients who died from acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) related to influenza A (H1N1); and (2) 10 age-matched, uninfected control lungs.
 - The lungs of both COVID-19 and influenza patients had diffuse alveolar damage and infiltrating perivascular lymphocytes. However, the lungs of COVID-19 patients also showed distinctive vascular features, including evidence that COVID-19 attacks the lining of blood vessels in the lungs. COVID-19 patients suffered from microscopic blood clots in the capillaries of the small air sacs that allow oxygen to pass into the blood stream; the lungs appeared to respond to the attack by growing tiny new blood vessels.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [COVID-19 and the Challenges of Remotely Running a College Athletics Department](#), May 22
- [Illinois Revises Immunity from Civil Liability for Certain Health Care Providers](#), May 21
- [Credit Agreements: Amendments to Consider in Light of COVID-19](#), May 21
- [The UK Information Commissioner's Regulatory Approach and Priorities During COVID-19](#), May 21

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