

# COVID-19 Daily Update

May 3, 2020

## Summary

The United States has 1,149,197 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 67,200 reported related deaths. Former FDA Commissioner Gottlieb asserted that stay-at-home orders and social distancing guidelines “didn’t work as well as we expected” and cautioned that COVID-19 may “persistent[ly] spread” with a steady stream of 20,000 to 30,000 new cases per day. FDA issued an emergency use authorization for remdesivir, an investigational antiviral drug, for the treatment of hospitalized patients with severe COVID-19. Gilead Sciences donated 1.5 million vials of the drug and plans to work with the federal government to distribute it to patients in need. Remdesivir will be available in U.S. hospitals starting this week. The Senate will return to Washington on Monday, May 4, under a new series of social distancing measures. A letter from Congress’ attending physician urges senators to maintain six feet of distance with others, limit the number of staff and visitors, and wear masks.

Dr. Deborah Birx described recent stay-at-home order protests as “devastatingly worrisome” and urged people to continue to social distance and take precautions against COVID-19. COVID-19 case counts continue to rise in 20 states, including Illinois, Texas, and Maryland, even as some have begun to relax restrictions. The governor of Ohio reversed a mandate requiring customers to wear face masks at businesses, asserting the order was “a bridge too far” and that “people were not going to accept the government telling them what to do.” Officials in Oklahoma abandoned similar face covering requirements after retail and restaurant employees were verbally and physically threatened. Seven northeastern states formed a coalition to jointly purchase masks, gowns, gloves, ventilators, and other medical and protective equipment. State governors hope to develop a regional supply chain in a bid to aggregate demand and drive down prices.

New York reported 299 deaths on Sunday, May 3. New York State concluded its state-wide antibody survey after randomly testing more than 15,000 residents. Of those tested in New York, 12.3% were positive for COVID-19 antibodies. In New York City, 20% of those tested were positive. The Bronx had the highest rate of positive tests at 27.6%. Brooklyn and Staten Island tied at 19.2%, followed by Queens, at 18.4%, and Manhattan, at 17.3%. Warmer weekend temperatures lured millions of Americans outside on Saturday, adding pressure on city and state officials grappling with social distancing restrictions. Mayor de Blasio warned New York City residents to resist the impulse to gather outdoors. The New York Police Department deployed more than 1,000 officers to enforce proper social distancing.

## **General/Employer Guidance**

### **Presidential updates**

- [White House Blocks Dr. Fauci from Testifying on COVID-19 to House Panel](#), May 2
  - Dr. Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), was invited to testify as a witness for a House subcommittee hearing on the federal government's response to the pandemic.
  - The request for Dr. Fauci's testimony was denied. White House Spokesman Deere stated that it is "counter-productive to have the very individuals involved in those efforts [to re-open America] appearing at Congressional hearings." The Administration plans to work "with Congress to offer testimony at the appropriate time."
- [Remarks by President Trump During Announcement on Remdesivir](#), May 1
  - FDA issued an [emergency use authorization](#) (EUA) for remdesivir, an investigational antiviral drug, for the treatment of hospitalized patients with severe COVID-19. Severe COVID-19 is defined as "patients with low blood oxygen levels" that need "oxygen therapy or more intensive breathing support such as a mechanical ventilator."
  - President Trump praised Gilead Sciences, for making "a very major contribution towards helping people."
  - Gilead Sciences [plans to donate](#) 1.5 million vials of remdesivir to the U.S. government, which is enough to treat 150,000 to 200,000 patients. The drug will be available in hospitals across the country in the coming week.

### **World Health Organization (WHO)**

- [WHO Situation Report 103 and Situation Report 104](#), May 3
  - Three new countries [reported](#) cases of COVID-19 over the last several days, including Comoros, Tajikistan, and Yemen.
  - WHO and the European Investment Bank [signed](#) a collaboration agreement to invest in health care in the countries that are most vulnerable to COVID-19. The project's first phase will address urgent health care needs in ten African countries.
  - WHO published an [FAQ](#) on the COVID-19 Supply Portal, a tool that supports funding requests for critical COVID-19 supplies.
  - WHO Director General Tedros [urged](#) every country to "implement a comprehensive package of measures to find, isolate, test, and treat every case" and "trace every contact."

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

- [CDC launches national viral genomics consortium to map COVID-19 transmission](#), May 1
  - CDC launched the "SARS-CoV-2 Sequencing for Public Health Emergency Response Epidemiology and Surveillance" (SPHERES) consortium, to expand the genome sequencing of COVID-19.
  - SPHERES creates a national network of labs to accelerate and provide real-time genomic data on the virus. Researchers will monitor any changes in the virus and will use this information to guide contact tracing, mitigation efforts, and infection control strategies.

- Consortium members include federal agencies, public health laboratories, academic institutions, and corporations.
- [COVIDView: Weekly Surveillance Summary of U.S. COVID-19 Activity](#), May 1
  - CDC summarized key COVID-19 disease indicators for the week ending April 25.
  - The national percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for COVID-19 remained similar to or decreased slightly from the previous week; it decreased from 19.4% to 17.1% in public health labs, remained similar at 11% in clinical labs, and decreased from 19.5% to 16.4% in commercial labs.
  - The overall cumulative hospitalization rate is 40.4 per 100,000, with the highest rates in people 65 years and older (131.6 per 100,000) and 50-64 years (63.7 per 100,000).
  - Based on death certificate data, the percentage of total deaths attributed to pneumonia, influenza, or COVID-19 decreased from 23.6% to 14.6% from the prior week, but remained significantly above baseline.
- [Public Health Response to the Initiation and Spread of COVID-19](#), May 1
  - A recent report, published by CDC as an early release, examined the spread of COVID-19 in the United States from February 24–April 21.
  - Travel accelerated the spread of COVID-19. The United States restricted travel from China on January 31. During February, however, 1.74 million travelers arrived from Schengen area countries, where the outbreak was spreading widely and rapidly.
  - The report also attributes the spread of COVID-19 to large gatherings, such as Mardi Gras in Louisiana and an international professional conference in Boston.
  - The virus further spread through the introduction of COVID-19 into high-risk workplaces, such as meat packing facilities, and densely populated areas, such as the New York metropolitan area.

## **New York State**

- [Cuomo reports slight uptick in deaths but fewer hospitalizations in New York](#), May 3
  - New York reported 299 deaths on Sunday, 10 more than the previous day; 276 died in hospitals and 23 died in nursing homes. The majority of deaths were in New York City.
  - New York reported 831 new hospitalizations on Sunday, down from the 900 daily hospitalizations recorded on average last week.
  - As of Saturday, May 2, 10,350 people remained hospitalized, down from the 18,825 hospitalized during the peak of the outbreak in early April.
- [Governor Cuomo Announces Results of Completed Antibody Testing Study](#), May 2
  - New York completed its antibody testing study and concluded that 12.3% of the State’s population has COVID-19 antibodies. The study randomly tested 15,000 people at grocery stores and community centers over the last two weeks. About 11.5% of women tested positive and 13.1% of men tested positive for antibodies.
  - In New York City, 20% of antibody tests were positive. The Bronx had the highest rate of positive tests, at 27.6%. Brooklyn and Staten Island tied at 19.2%, followed by Queens, at 18.4%, and Manhattan, at 17.3%.

- Hispanic people tested positive at a higher rate than any other ethnic group, 25.4%, followed by blacks at 17.4%. People declaring more than one racial heritage tested positive at 14.4%, Asians at 11.1%, and whites at 7%.
- New York State plans to distribute over seven million cloth masks to vulnerable New Yorkers and essential workers, including 500,000 for homeless shelters, 2 million for elderly residents, 1 million for food banks, and 2 million for grocery stores and food delivery workers.
- [\*Executive Order Delaying School Board Elections and Budget Votes Until June 9\*](#), May 1
  - Governor Cuomo issued an executive order delaying school board elections and budget votes statewide until June 9. The school board elections and budget votes will be conducted by mail. The State will send all qualified voters an absentee ballot with pre-paid return postage.
  - Local special district and village elections will be delayed until September 15.
- [\*New York Attorney General Issues Guidance on Funeral Homes and Consumer Rights\*](#), May 2
  - New York Attorney General James issued guidance for families navigating the funeral planning process during the pandemic.
  - Documents related to funeral arrangements may be signed electronically during the pandemic. Cremation authorization forms still require a physical signature. Funeral homes may not charge additional fees based on cause of death and may not refuse to handle the bodies of those who died of COVID-19.
  - Downstate crematories and funeral homes have been [overwhelmed](#) by the number of COVID-19 deaths. As a result, many bodies are being stored at funeral homes, in trucks, and other temporary storage facilities.
  - The New York State Cemetery Board recently approved new [emergency regulations](#) to allow funeral directors to more easily transfer bodies awaiting cremation in the City to upstate crematories with more availability.

### **New York City**

- [\*City Announces New Television Program to Support Remote Learning\*](#), May 1
  - The City launched a new educational public television program produced by WNET and the New York City Department of Education. The program will feature lessons for children in pre-K through second grade to supplement remote learning.

### **Other Related Updates**

- [\*Seven Eastern states form coalition to purchase supplies and equipment\*](#), May 3
  - The governors of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island announced an initiative to jointly purchase masks, gowns, gloves, ventilators, and other medical and protective equipment.
  - By combining their orders the governors expect to purchase supplies at lower prices, stabilize the supply chain, and avoid bidding against one another for scarce items.

- [\*FEMA Pandemic Response Updates\*](#), May 3
  - President Trump recently [delegated](#) to the FEMA administrator authority to approve funding for crisis counseling related to the pandemic. States are eligible if: (1) the state has more than 5,000 COVID-19 cases; or (2) the state has more than 1,000 COVID-19 cases per 1 million people. FEMA subsequently [approved](#) crisis counseling requests for over 30 states.
  - FEMA issued [guidance](#) on disaster assistance applications. After applying for FEMA assistance, applicants may be referred to the Small Business Administration disaster loan program. FEMA urges all applicants to return the SBA loan application. Failure to return the application may disqualify applicants from other sources of FEMA assistance.
  - FEMA is [coordinating](#) shipments of a 14-day supply of personal protective equipment to more than 15,000 nursing homes. The first shipment of a seven-day supply will begin during the first week of May. An additional seven-day supply will be shipped in early June.
  
- [\*Congress declines the administration's offer of rapid testing for officials\*](#), May 2
  - The Senate will return to Washington on Monday under a new series of social distancing measures. A [letter](#) from Congress' attending physician urges senators to maintain six feet of distance with others, limit the number of staff and visitors, and to wear masks.
  - Secretary of Health and Human Services Azar [offered](#) to send three rapid-result testing machines and 1,000 tests to the Capitol. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader McConnell declined the offer in a joint statement and asserted that the resources should be deployed to those in greater need.
  - President Trump responded to the declination on Twitter, and [stated](#) that "we have plenty of testing" and that there was "no reason to turn it down except politics."
  - Rand Paul of Kentucky is the only senator that has tested positive for COVID-19. In the House, seven members have tested positive or have been presumed to be positive for COVID-19.
  
- [\*Department of Labor Issues Safety Alert for Food Service Industry\*](#), May 1
  - The Department of Labor (DOL) issued an alert with safety tips to protect food service workers from COVID-19 exposure while providing curbside pickup and takeout service.
  
- [\*Department of Health and Human Services COVID-19 Funding Updates\*](#), May 1
  - The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) began processing payments from the [Provider Relief Fund](#). HHS will distribute \$12 billion to 395 hospitals that provided inpatient care for 100 or more COVID-19 patients through April 10. These facilities accounted for 71% of COVID-19 inpatient admissions reported to HHS across nearly 6,000 hospitals. HHS will distribute \$10 billion to health centers located in rural areas.
  - HHS' Office of Minority Health (OMH) announced a [competitive funding opportunity](#) to support the development of a national, state, and local network of public and community-based organization to disseminate COVID-19 information to minority

groups and disadvantaged communities. OMH will fund one award for a project period of up to three years and a total budget of \$40 million.

- [ACLU Calls For Release of Pregnant Inmates During the Coronavirus Pandemic](#), May 1
  - The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is asking federal and state corrections officials to free all pregnant inmates with less than a year left on their sentences. ACLU [estimates](#) that over 200,000 prisoners could die of COVID-19 unless inmate releases are accelerated.
  - This week, New York Governor Cuomo [ordered](#) the release of pregnant inmates with non-violent convictions and less than six months left to serve.
  
- [FDA COVID-19 Update: Daily Roundup](#), May 1
  - FDA updated [guidance](#) on convalescent plasma. A negative lab test for COVID-19 is no longer required to qualify for the donation of convalescent plasma. Revised guidance recommends that individuals have complete resolution of symptoms for at least 14 days prior to donation.
  - FDA posted a [video](#) with tips for grocery shopping during the pandemic.
  - FDA issued an emergency use authorization (EUA) for the use of continuous renal replacement therapy (CRRT) products during the pandemic. CRRT is a type of dialysis therapy used to filter and clean the blood when the kidneys are damaged or are not functioning normally.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [Federal Reserve Announces Updated Terms of “Main Street Lending Program”](#), May 1
- [DOL Provides Sweeping Deadline Extensions and Other Relief for Employee Benefit Plans, Participants and Beneficiaries Due to the COVID-19 Outbreak](#), May 1
- [Going Back to Work: Employer Use of “Apps” on Employee PDAs/Smart Phones for COVID-19 Contact Tracing](#), May 1

Send questions to:

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