

April 22, 2021

Summary

The United States has 31,862,987 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 569,404 reported related deaths. On April 21, President Biden announced that the United States has administered 200 million COVID-19 vaccines to Americans. He encouraged Americans to continue getting vaccinated, and noted that small and medium-sized businesses with fewer than 500 employees can be reimbursed for providing paid leave to employees to get vaccinated.

New data shows that the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are safe during pregnancy. Another study demonstrates that the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is protective against both symptomatic and asymptomatic COVID-19 and that it is also effective against variants. An advisory panel is scheduled to meet tomorrow to discuss the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and its possible link to rare blood clots. It is expected that federal authorities will recommend ending the pause on the vaccine and instruct the company to attach a warning to the vaccine's label. On Wednesday, FDA said that it found serious flaws at the Baltimore plant that had to throw out nearly 15 million doses of Johnson & Johnson's vaccine. FDA said that the company manufacturing the vaccine, Emergent BioSolutions, might have contaminated additional doses at the plant and failed to fully investigate the contamination. FDA also found fault with the plant's disinfection practices, safety precautions, size and design, handling of raw materials, and training of workers.

On April 21, the United States reported 64,853 COVID-19 cases. For nearly two weeks, outbreaks in certain states have offset improvements in others, resulting in a largely stagnant national case total each day. During this time, Michigan has had the country's worst outbreak, with hospitalizations approaching record levels. In the same period, New York has experienced over a 10% decrease in cases, deaths, and hospitalizations.

As of April 21, New York reported 45 deaths, 3,567 hospitalizations, and 811 COVID-19 patients in intensive care. Approximately 4,996, or 2.06%, of the 242,432 tests administered in New York were positive for COVID-19. New York has administered 13,929,970 doses of the vaccines to patients; 43% of New York residents have received at least one dose of the vaccines; and 29.7% are fully vaccinated. Beginning April 23, 16 State-run, mass vaccination sites will no longer require appointments for residents ages 60 and older. On April 19, Governor Cuomo announced that New York's FY 2022 budget continues support for middle-class income tax cuts to facilitate economic recovery from the pandemic.

U.S. Government Updates

- [*Remarks by President Biden on the COVID-19 Response and State of Vaccinations*](#), April 21
 - On Wednesday, President Biden announced that the United States has administered 200 million COVID-19 vaccines to Americans.
 - He encouraged Americans to get vaccinated and urged employers to give paid time off to their employees to obtain the vaccine. He also noted that, under the American Rescue Plan, small and medium-sized businesses with fewer than 500 employees can be reimbursed for the cost of providing paid leave for their employees to get vaccinated, as well as any recovery time from the vaccination.

Vaccines and Therapeutics

- [*FDA Inspection Finds Numerous Problems At Facility Intended To Make Johnson & Johnson Vaccine*](#), April 21
 - On April 12, U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) initiated an inspection of an Emergent BioSolutions factory in Baltimore after workers there inadvertently cross-contaminated millions of Johnson & Johnson vaccine doses in March. Four days later, FDA asked Emergent to stop manufacturing any new vaccine materials at the facility.
 - On Wednesday, FDA [released](#) results of its inspection. According to their [report](#), inspectors found that Emergent had not thoroughly examined what might have caused the March cross-contamination incident, calling into question whether other vaccine batches were also subject to cross-contamination.
 - Among other issues, FDA's observations included: the factory was not maintained in a clean and sanitary condition; equipment was not cleaned and maintained properly; procedures to prevent cross-contamination were not followed; written quality-assurance procedures were inadequate; and employees were inadequately trained.
 - Emergent said in a [statement](#) that it is committed to working with FDA and Johnson & Johnson to resolve the issues. Because FDA has not authorized the facility to be part of the coronavirus vaccine supply chain, no Johnson & Johnson doses already administered to patients in the U.S. were produced at this facility.
- [*Johnson & Johnson Trial Shows Vaccine Effective, Even Against Variants*](#), April 21
 - Johnson & Johnson released [results](#) from a large study of its single-shot COVID-19 vaccine that enrolled 43,783 participants across three continents. The results show that the vaccine was 67% effective against moderate to severe/critical COVID-19 at least 14 days after administration and 66% effective at 28 days after vaccination. The vaccine was 77% effective against only severe/critical COVID-19 at 14 days and 85% effective at 28 days.
 - These statistics track the initial numbers reported by the company in January. Additionally, data collected since January show no evidence of a decline in protection over time.
 - The vaccine is protective against symptomatic and asymptomatic disease. It is also effective against rapidly spreading variants. In South Africa (where the B.1.351 variant accounts for 95% of cases), the vaccine was 64% effective against moderate to severe/critical disease and 82% effective against only severe/critical disease after 28 days. In Brazil (where the P2 variant accounts for 69% of cases), the vaccine was 68%

effective against moderate to severe/critical disease and 88% effective against only severe/critical disease after 28 days.

- [*Health Officials Lean Toward Resuming Johnson & Johnson Coronavirus Vaccine — But With a Warning*](#), April 22
 - Unless new and surprising information emerges, U.S. authorities have indicated that they are likely to recommend resuming administration of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine, possibly as soon as this weekend, according to two government officials who spoke with the Washington Post on condition of anonymity. The officials confirmed that U.S. regulators will likely require the vaccine to carry a warning of a possible link to rare blood clots but are unlikely to place further restrictions on its use, as European regulators did [earlier](#) this week.
 - The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, an independent expert panel that advises CDC, is holding a meeting Friday where it will publicly discuss the vaccine and its future use. It last met on April 14, the day after CDC and FDA recommended a temporary halt of the vaccine's use in response to six reported cases of severe blood clots.
 - According to CDC Director Rochelle Walensky, the total number of reported blood-clotting cases will be announced Friday. Both Walensky and acting FDA Commissioner Janet Woodcock previewed that the number will be low and not particularly concerning to regulators.
- [*Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 Vaccines Do Not Appear To Pose Serious Risk During Pregnancy, Research Shows*](#), April 21
 - According to new data published in the New England Journal of Medicine, the mRNA COVID-19 vaccines made by Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna do not appear to pose any serious risk during pregnancy.
 - The study reviewed data on 35,691 pregnant people between the ages of 16 to 54 from December 2020 to February 2021. Instances of adverse pregnancy and neonatal outcomes in persons vaccinated against COVID-19 were similar to incidences reported prior to the pandemic. Regarding side effects, soreness at the injection site was more frequent in pregnant vaccine recipients, while headaches, muscle aches, chills, and fevers were all less frequent.
 - In addition to being safe, the vaccines are effective in protecting pregnant people against COVID-19, and mothers may pass along protective antibodies to newborns.

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

- [*CDC Interpretation of Forecasts of New Deaths and Hospitalizations*](#), April 21
 - CDC [consolidated](#) data from 36 models projecting the COVID-19 death rate. Predicted rates differ among the forecasts, depending on assumptions about the prevalence and rigor of social distancing behaviors. CDC's national ensemble forecast indicates that the number of newly reported COVID-19 deaths will likely remain stable or have an uncertain trend over the next four weeks. It predicts between 2,100 and 8,800 new deaths and between 579,000 and 596,000 cumulative deaths by May 15.
 - CDC [consolidated](#) data from 11 models projecting the number of daily COVID-19 hospitalizations. The forecast predicts daily hospitalizations will remain stable or have

an uncertain trend nationally over the next four weeks, with between 2,200 and 8,200 new hospitalizations per day by May 17. It predicts that hospital admissions will increase in three jurisdictions and decrease in four jurisdictions.

New York State

- [New York State COVID-19 Updates](#), April 22
 - New York reported 45 deaths, 3,567 hospitalizations, and 811 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on April 21, 2021.
 - Approximately 4,996, or 2.06%, of the 242,432 tests administered in New York on April 21 were positive for COVID-19.
 - As of April 21, New York has administered 13,929,970 doses of the vaccines to patients; 43% of New York residents have received at least one dose of the vaccines; and 29.7% are fully vaccinated.
 - Beginning April 23, 16 State-run, mass vaccination sites will no longer [require](#) appointments for residents ages 60 and older. New York State will allocate additional vaccines to facilitate this expanded access. Governor Cuomo warned, however, that there might be a wait for those opting to walk-in depending on demand.
 - On April 21, South Beach Psychiatric Center—a facility that has served as an emergency hospital since April 2020—[discharged](#) its final COVID-19 patient. During its time as an overflow center, the facility provided care for over 1,000 patients, second only to the Javits Center. Due to the decline in COVID-19 hospitalizations, South Beach Psychiatric Center will no longer serve as an overflow center.
 - On April 19, Governor Cuomo [announced](#) that New York’s FY 2022 budget continues support for middle-class income tax cuts to facilitate economic recovery from the pandemic. The cuts, which the State enacted in 2016, are now in their fourth year and are expected to save 4.8 million residents more than \$2.2 billion in 2021. When the cuts are fully-operative, middle-class taxpayers will pay nearly 20% less income tax, the lowest middle-class rate in more than 70 years.

New York City

- [New York City COVID-19 Updates](#), April 22
 - New York City will [spend](#) \$30 million on a tourism campaign set to launch in June, aiming to revive a sector that has struggled throughout the pandemic. This campaign, which is made possible by federal stimulus funds, features a budget that is ten times larger than the City’s average spend on tourism advertising per year.
 - New York Metropolitan Transit Authority’s (MTA) \$55 billion [plan](#) to modernize subways, buses, and rails is at risk because of revenue losses and increased borrowing due to the pandemic. In an annual report on MTA debt, New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli said MTA might need to cut several billion dollars from its five-year spending plan unless it can reduce expenses or find new sources of revenue.

International

- [India’s](#) health ministry reported 312,731 new infections on Thursday, the most recorded in any country on a single day. India has surpassed 15.6 million total infections, second most after the United States. The death toll has also begun to climb precipitously, with 2,104 deaths announced Thursday.

Other Updates

- [Burned out by the pandemic, 3 in 10 health-care workers consider leaving the profession](#), April 22
 - According to a Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation poll, roughly 3 in 10 health-care workers have weighed leaving their profession. More than half are burned out, and about 6 in 10 say stress from the pandemic has harmed their mental health.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [American Rescue Plan Act \(ARPA\) Phase 5 Stimulus Package – Highlights of Certain Key Tax-Related Provisions in ARPA](#), March 26
- [American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 – Summary of Key Provisions](#), March 25
- [Key Employee Benefit Provisions of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021](#), March 19

Send questions to:

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