

April 29, 2021

Summary

The United States has 32,230,809 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 574,330 reported related deaths. On Tuesday, President Biden delivered a statement on the White House's COVID-19 response. In it, he touted the progress being made in combatting the virus, but encouraged Americans to continue getting vaccinations and wearing masks in crowded indoor venues. He made similar statements in his address to a joint session of Congress on Wednesday. On Thursday, the State Department urged U.S. citizens to leave India as soon as possible, amidst India's surge in coronavirus infections. The warning came as U.S. government assistance flights began arriving in India carrying COVID-19 relief supplies worth more than \$100 million.

CDC announced this week that fully vaccinated Americans no longer need to wear a mask while outside unless they are in a large crowd. Moderna released new data suggesting that the company's vaccine can remain stable for three months if refrigerated but without the need for deep freeze. Moderna also announced that it is ramping up production in hopes of supplying three billion vaccine doses in 2022. Pfizer hopes that its pill to treat COVID-19 will be available for use by the end of the year, while Oxford scientists are working on a blood test to measure how long COVID vaccines will provide protection. With vaccines, cruises might resume in July.

As of April 29, the United States's COVID infection rate shows significant signs of decline, with the rolling, seven-day average dropping by almost 10,000 cases from the prior week. Outbreaks are subsiding in the Midwest, as Michigan, Minnesota, and Illinois continue to report declines in new cases. Oregon is currently experiencing a rapid increase in infection rate. Officials in New Jersey retroactively corrected their case total on April 26, removing more than 9,000 duplicate cases from their report, which caused an artificially large decline on the national curve that day.

As of April 28, New York reported 38 deaths, 2,934 hospitalizations, and 691 COVID-19 patients in intensive care. Approximately 4,073, or 1.8%, of the 226,068 tests administered in New York were positive for COVID-19. New York has administered 15,170,850 doses of the vaccines to patients; 45.6% of New York residents have received at least one dose of the vaccines; and 33.4% are fully vaccinated. All State-run mass vaccination sites will now offer walk-in appointments. Beginning May 15, gyms outside of New York City can increase capacity from 33% to 50%. Additionally, casinos can increase maximum capacity from 25% to 50%. Finally, offices will be able to operate at 75% capacity instead of 50%. Beginning May 17, New York State will lift the food and beverage service curfew for outdoor dining areas, and indoor dining areas will have no curfew beginning May 31. On May 19, large-scale, outdoor event venues can increase spectator capacity from 20% to 33%.

U.S. Government

- [Remarks by President Biden on the COVID-19 Response](#), April 27
 - On Tuesday, President Biden delivered a statement on the White House’s COVID-19 response.
 - The President touted the progress being made in combatting the virus, and noted that, per the recent CDC guidance, it is now safe for vaccinated people to be outside maskless.
 - He also encouraged Americans to continue wearing masks in crowded indoor venues.
- [Remarks by President Biden in Address to a Joint Session of Congress](#), April 29
 - “Go get vaccinated, America. Go and get the vaccination. They’re available. You’re eligible now.”
 - “There’s no wall high enough to keep any virus out. And our own vaccine supply — as it grows to meet our needs; and we’re meeting them — will become an arsenal of vaccines for other countries, just as America was the arsenal of democracy for the world — and in consequence, influenced the world.”
- [FACT SHEET: Biden-Harris Administration Delivers Emergency COVID-19 Assistance for India](#), April 28
 - The United States is delivering supplies worth more than \$100 million in the coming days to provide urgent [relief](#) to India.
 - U.S. Government assistance flights will start arriving in India on Thursday, April 29, and will continue into next week.
- [State Department Urges Americans to Leave India As Soon As Possible Amid Record Case Surge](#), April 29
 - The State Department is urging U.S. citizens to leave India “as soon as it is safe to do so” and avoid traveling there, a warning that came hours before India reported yet another record number of new coronavirus infections.

Vaccines and Therapeutics

- [Moderna COVID Vaccine Can Remain Stable at Refrigerated Temperatures for 3 Months](#), April 29
 - Moderna announced earlier this week that, according to new data, its COVID-19 mRNA vaccine can remain stable for three months when refrigerated between 36 and 46 degrees Fahrenheit.
 - Currently, the vaccine is approved by U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to be stored at those temperatures for only up to 30 days, and up to seven months at minus 4 degrees Fahrenheit.
 - If the new refrigerated shelf-life is authorized by FDA, it could facilitate easier distribution to doctor’s offices and other smaller settings, the company commented.
 - Moderna also [announced](#) that it would boost investment to increase supply of its vaccine in an effort to double the number of doses it will produce in 2022 to up to three billion doses.

- [*Pfizer's New At-Home Pill to Treat COVID Could Be Available by End of the Year*](#), April 27
 - Pfizer's experimental oral drug to treat COVID-19 at the first signs of illness could be available by the end of the year if clinical trials go well and FDA approves it, said the company's CEO, Albert Bourla.
 - The new drug is part of a class of medicines called protein inhibitors, which work by inhibiting an enzyme that the virus needs in order to replicate in human cells. Protein inhibitors are currently used to treat other viral pathogens, like HIV and hepatitis C.
 - Pfizer is also still testing its COVID-19 vaccine in children ages 6 months to 11 years. Bourla stated that he is "very optimistic" that FDA will approve use of the vaccine in adolescents once the clinical trial is completed.

- [*New Blood Tests Should Show How Long A COVID-19 Vaccine Will Protect You*](#), April 28
 - Researchers at Oxford University are trying to develop tests that can be performed using a blood sample that will determine whether a COVID-19 vaccine will work and how long it will work for.
 - To do so, they are deliberately exposing volunteers to the coronavirus. The volunteers are all healthy young adults who have previously gotten sick with COVID-19. The point of the study is to determine whether there is a specific level of antibodies that makes reinfection impossible.
 - If there is such a level, and the researchers can identify that level with specificity, it would be relatively straightforward to determine whether a vaccine triggers the production of a sufficient amount of antibodies by using a simple blood test to measure antibody levels. Later tests could be used to measure how long the vaccine's protection lasts.
 - Such a test could become key to quickly developing and testing vaccines to ward off variants of the coronavirus that emerge in the future.

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

- [*CDC Interpretation of Forecasts of New Deaths and Hospitalizations*](#), April 28
 - 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 1,900 and 6,600 new deaths and between 583,000 and 595,000 cumulative deaths by May 22. At the state- and territory-level, it predicts that the number of newly reported deaths will likely decrease in five jurisdictions and will remain stable or have an uncertain trend in all other jurisdictions.
 - 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 2,100 and 8,700 new hospitalizations per day by May 24. At the state- and territory-level, it predicts that hospital admissions will increase in one jurisdiction and decrease in 19 jurisdictions.

- [*CDC Eases Outdoor Mask Guidance for Vaccinated Americans*](#), April 27
 - CDC released updated [guidance](#) on mask wearing on Tuesday. According to the updated guidance, Americans who are fully vaccinated against the coronavirus no longer need to wear a mask outdoors while walking, running, hiking or biking alone, or when in small gatherings, including with members of their own households.
 - Masks are still necessary indoors and in crowded outdoor spaces, including sports stadiums and concert venues.
 - After the CDC announcement, several states, including California, New York, Louisiana, Maine, and Massachusetts, relaxed their outdoor mask mandates accordingly.

- [*Cruises Could Resume In U.S. By Mid-July With Vaccinations, CDC Says*](#), April 29
 - CDC is now telling the cruise industry that cruises could resume as early as mid-July.
 - In its updated return-to-sailing framework, CDC states that cruise companies will be able to bypass previously required simulated voyages if a ship attests that 98% of its crew and 95% of its passengers are fully vaccinated.
 - Many major cruise lines have already announced that they will require future guests to be fully vaccinated. Royal Caribbean, Celebrity, and Norwegian have also already announced plans to begin sailing ships out of the Caribbean without the need for CDC approval because the voyages will not involve any U.S. ports.

New York State

- [*New York State COVID-19 Updates*](#), April 29
 - New York reported 38 deaths, 2,934 hospitalizations, and 691 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on April 28, 2021.
 - Approximately 4,073, or 1.8%, of the 226,068 tests administered in New York on April 28 were positive for COVID-19.
 - As of April 28, New York has administered 15,170,850 doses of the vaccines to patients; 45.6% of New York residents have received at least one dose of the vaccines; and 33.4% are fully vaccinated.
 - As of April 29, all State-run mass [vaccination](#) sites will offer eligible New Yorkers walk-in appointments on a first come first serve basis. The State's walk-in appointments are reserved for first doses only and second doses will be scheduled automatically after administration of the initial shot. Governor Cuomo encouraged all vaccine providers to begin allowing walk-in appointments.
 - On April 27, Governor Cuomo [announced](#) that New York State will adopt CDC's new [guidance](#) regarding mask use for fully vaccinated people.

- [*Governor Cuomo Announces State Will End Food and Beverage Service Curfew*](#), April 28
 - Beginning May 17, New York State will lift the food and beverage service curfew for outdoor dining areas. Indoor dining areas will also have no curfew beginning May 31.
 - Also on May 17, New York State will lift its 1 a.m. curfew for catered events where attendees have provided proof of full vaccination or recent negative COVID test. The curfew for all catered events is scheduled to be lifted May 31.
 - Beginning on May 3, catered events can resume at residences above of the State's residential gathering limit, as long as the events are staffed by a professional, licensed

caterer; permitted by the respective locality or municipality; and adhere to the State’s health and safety guidance. On the same day, New York will align its guidance for dancing among attendees at catered events with neighboring states—replacing fixed dance zones for each table with social distancing and masks.

- [*Governor Cuomo Announces Additional Reopening Guidance*](#), April 26
 - Beginning May 15, gyms and fitness centers outside of New York City can increase capacity from 33% to 50%. Additionally, casinos and gaming facilities can increase maximum capacity from 25% to 50%. Finally, offices will be able to operate at 75% capacity instead of 50%.
 - Beginning May 19, large-scale, outdoor event venues can increase spectator capacity from 20% to 33%. Social distancing, masks, health screenings, and all other State health and safety protocols remain in effect.

New York City

- [*New York City COVID-19 Updates*](#), April 29
 - Beginning May 3, New York City will [permit](#) seating at bars, consistent with the State’s food service guidance.
 - Beginning July 1, New York City will fully [reopen](#). In making this announcement, Mayor de Blasio said, “We are ready for stores to open, for businesses to open, offices, theaters, full strength.”

International

- [India](#) is experiencing a continued surge in coronavirus cases. The Indian health ministry on Thursday reported more than 375,000 cases and more than 3,600 deaths, and hospitals warned of critical shortages of ventilator beds, medical oxygen, medicines and other lifesaving supplies.
- [Nepal](#) imposed a two-week lockdown in its capital, Kathmandu, and several other cities amid a rise in coronavirus cases nationwide, including among climbers at Mount Everest Base Camp.
- [Hong Kong](#) eased restrictions on Thursday at restaurants and bars where staff and customers have begun receiving coronavirus vaccinations, part of an effort to help businesses hurt by the pandemic while attempting to [boost](#) vaccination rates.
- In [Russia](#), the government began a new program this week aimed at incentivizing vaccination turnout with gift cards.
- [France](#) outlined plans Thursday for a gradual reopening of the country. President Macron said that schools will reopen next week, followed by the return of museums, cinemas, shops, and outdoor service at cafes on May 19.

Other Updates

- [100 U.S. Colleges Will Require Vaccinations to Attend In-Person Classes in the Fall](#), April 29
 - More than 100 colleges across the country have said they will require students to receive coronavirus vaccines in order to attend in-person classes in the fall, according to a New York Times survey.
 - Those requirements come as COVID-19 cases have continued to climb steadily this spring at colleges and universities across the United States. More than 660,000 cases have been linked to the institutions since the start of the pandemic, with one-third of those since January 1, 2021.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [Annual Meetings, Compensation and COVID-19: Where Things Stand](#), April 13
- [Managing Volatility in a Pandemic? Document your Derivatives Transactions Appropriately](#), April 13
- [California Authorities Issue a Wide Range of Rules and Guidance on COVID-19](#), April 10
- [HHS Initiates Initial \\$30 Billion Distribution of the \\$100 Billion Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund](#), April 10

Send questions to:

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