

April 5, 2021

Summary

The United States has 30,735,626 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 555,226 reported related deaths. As of April 5, 62 million Americans have been fully vaccinated and 108 million have received their first dose. In an interview with National Public Radio (NPR), Dr. Anthony Fauci predicted that a fourth COVID-19 wave in the United States would not be as severe as the previous three, thanks to the current pace of vaccinations.

Late last week, the federal government reported that drug overdose deaths in the 12-month period ending August 2020 increased by about 27% over the previous period. The same day, the Biden administration revealed a seven-part plan designed to reduce the number of overdose deaths. The Biden administration has also ordered Johnson & Johnson to take full operational control over the Emergent facility that ruined 15 million doses of vaccine last week. CDC recently announced that fully vaccinated Americans may travel but should continue practicing safety measures. A new study suggests that COVID-19 vaccines are safe for pregnant recipients and their babies. Meanwhile, clinical trials in other countries are testing a new and less expensive vaccine that is expected to be easier to produce and distribute around the globe.

Michigan is reporting COVID-19 cases at a higher rate than any other state, with five metro areas reporting higher positivity rates than New York City. Hospitalization and reported cases have fallen sharply in much of the South and West; however, testing has also decreased in those areas. Alabama, which averaged more than 4,000 cases per day during its peak in January, is now reporting only about 400 infections per day.

As of April 4, New York reported 57 deaths, 4,434 hospitalizations, and 906 COVID-19 patients in intensive care. Approximately 6,538, or 4.38%, of the 150,225 tests administered in New York were positive for COVID-19. New York has administered 10,480,155 doses of the vaccines to patients, and 33.3% of New York residents have received at least one dose of the vaccines and 20.7% are fully vaccinated. Beginning April 7, New York will launch the “Roll Up Your Sleeve” ad campaign to encourage all New Yorkers, especially those from neighborhoods with disproportionately high infection rates, to receive a COVID-19 vaccination. On April 2, New York allowed performing arts and entertainment venues to reopen at 33% capacity. Venues may now host up to 100 people indoors or up to 200 people outdoors, with increased capacity if all attendees present proof of completed vaccination or a recent negative COVID-19 test result. On April 1, Governor Cuomo assured New Yorkers that Johnson & Johnson’s reported vaccine production issue will not impact New York’s vaccine supply for this week and that the State will honor all appointments scheduled at State-run mass vaccination sites.

U.S. Government

- [*Drug Overdose Deaths Spiked During the Pandemic; White House Unveils Plan Address the Issue*](#), April 1
 - On Thursday, Regina LaBelle, the acting head of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, reported that drug overdose deaths in the 12-month period ending August 2020 increased by about 27% over the previous period.
 - Furthermore, LaBelle said Americans ages 35 to 44 were most at risk for overdose-related deaths.
 - LaBelle’s statements are based on provisional data collected by CDC.
 - Also on Thursday, the White House revealed a seven-part [plan](#) designed to reduce the number of overdose deaths in the United States. The plan, which prioritizes expanding access to treatment and recovery support services, will be implemented “over the next year.”
- [*Fauci Expects Vaccinations to Keep a Fourth COVID-19 Wave at Bay*](#), April 2
 - In an interview with NPR, Dr. Fauci predicted that a fourth COVID-19 wave in the United States would not be as severe as the previous three, thanks to the current pace of vaccinations.
 - “[I]t’s kind of like a race between the potential for a surge and our ability to vaccinate as many people as we can,” Dr. Fauci said. “And hopefully, . . . the vaccine is going to win this one.”
 - His prediction comes as certain parts of the country, especially Michigan and the Northeast, are seeing rises in daily COVID-19 cases. Dr. Fauci attributed these increases to states and cities “pull[ing] back a bit on the mitigation methods, namely pulling back on mask mandates and pulling back on the guidelines of crowded places and physical distancing.” Furthermore, he noted that the dominant variant currently circulating in the United States is more contagious.
 - More than 56 million Americans have been fully vaccinated and nearly 100 million have received at least one dose.

Vaccines and Therapeutics

- [*Researchers Are Hatching a Low-Cost Coronavirus Vaccine*](#), April 5
 - A new COVID-19 vaccine, named NVD-HXP-S, is entering clinical trials in Brazil, Mexico, Thailand, and Vietnam. It is the first vaccine to reach clinical trials that uses a new molecular design that is expected to create more potent antibodies than the vaccines currently in distribution.
 - The new vaccine could also be easier to make. Unlike the vaccines by Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, and others, NVD-HXP-S can be mass produced in chicken eggs, the same way billions of influenza vaccines are produced every year in factories worldwide.
 - If the clinical trials show the vaccine to be safe and effective, flu vaccine manufacturers could potentially produce well over a billion doses per year.
 - Testing with vaccinated animals has raised hopes for the vaccine’s prospects. The first phase of clinical trials will conclude in July; the final stage is expected to take several more months to complete.

- [COVID-19 Vaccine Is Safe During Pregnancy And May Protect Baby, Too](#), April 2
 - A new study [published](#) in The American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology shows that COVID-19 vaccines are not only safe and effective for pregnant and breastfeeding recipients, they may also offer some protection for their babies, as well.
 - Researchers studied 131 participants. Of them, 84 were pregnant, 31 were lactating, and 16 were not pregnant. Each participant received either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine. Blood samples were collected at the time of each vaccine dose and again after six weeks.
 - The levels of antibodies were similar between the groups. Side effects for the pregnant and lactating participants were mild and similar to those of non-pregnant participants.
 - Notably, antibodies were also found in umbilical cord blood and breast milk samples studied. The researchers noted that when a patient receives an influenza vaccine during pregnancy, the antibodies that develop and cross the placenta are protective of the baby for the first several months of life. They are hopeful that the same is true of the COVID-19 vaccines, but additional research is needed.
 - Pfizer recently began [another](#) trial with 4,000 pregnant participants to test the safety and efficacy of its vaccine.

- [Johnson & Johnson Takes Over Plant Where Contractor Ruined 15 Million Vaccine Doses](#), April 4
 - Days after Johnson & Johnson announced that it had to dispose of 15 million doses of its single-shot COVID-19 vaccine due to errors made at a Baltimore plant run by contractor Emergent BioSolutions, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has [directed](#) Johnson & Johnson to take over all aspects of manufacturing the vaccine at the plant.
 - The 15 million discarded vaccines were tainted when workers at the plant, which was producing both the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and the AstraZeneca vaccine (currently pending FDA authorization), confused the ingredients for the two vaccines.
 - Moving forward, the plant will manufacture only the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

- [Walgreens Wasn't Following U.S. Guidance on Spacing Pfizer Doses, But, Following Complaints, Will Do So](#), April 5
 - Walgreens—which has inoculated hundreds of thousands of Americans this year—has been scheduling appointments for the Pfizer vaccine four weeks apart. CDC currently recommends a three-week gap between the requisite doses of the Pfizer vaccine.
 - Although it recommends that the Pfizer vaccine does be administered as close to three weeks apart as possible, CDC [says](#) that a window of up to six weeks is acceptable, if necessary.
 - Walgreens also administers the Moderna vaccine, which requires four weeks between doses. The company cited automatic scheduling considerations in explaining its decision to administer second doses of both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines four weeks apart.
 - Beginning as soon as the end of this week, Walgreens will begin to schedule second Pfizer doses three weeks after the first.

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

- [COVID Data Tracker Weekly Review](#), April 2
 - CDC summarized key COVID-19 disease indicators for the past week.
 - As of April 1, 153.6 million vaccine doses have been administered in the United States. Overall, approximately 99.6 million people in the United States have received at least one dose of vaccine, which is 30% of the population. Approximately 56.1 million people are fully vaccinated, which is 16.9% of the population. The seven-day average number of reported vaccine dose administrations was 2.9 million, a 17.7% acceleration compared to the previous week.
 - The current seven-day average number of daily new cases reported is 62,167. This is an 8.4% increase compared to the previous week's average.
 - The current seven-day average number of new hospital admission reported is 4,948, a 4.8% increase compared to the previous week's average.
 - The current seven-day average of new deaths reported is 880, a 7.7% decrease compared to the previous week's average.
- [Vaccinated Americans Can Travel](#), April 2
 - CDC has updated its domestic and international travel [guidance](#) for fully vaccinated people, defined as those for whom it has been at least two weeks since receiving their last dose of vaccine.
 - Concluding that fully vaccinated travelers are less likely to get and spread COVID-19, the [guidance](#) instructs that those who are fully vaccinated can travel safely within the U.S. without being tested for COVID-19 before or after travel and self-quarantining. The guidance maintains that travelers should continue to wear a mask, stay six feet away from others, avoid crowds, and frequently wash their hands.
 - For [international](#) travel, CDC has updated its guidance, instructing that fully vaccinated Americans should get tested three to five days after travel, but no longer need to be tested beforehand, unless their destination requires it. Vaccinated Americans also do not need to self-quarantine upon returning to the U.S. Not all countries are [allowing](#) tourists.
 - CDC Director Rochelle Walensky continues to [discourage](#) nonessential travel, citing sustained increases in the seven-day average of cases and hospitalizations.

New York State

- [New York State COVID-19 Updates](#), April 5
 - New York reported 57 deaths, 4,434 hospitalizations, and 906 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on April 4, 2021.
 - Approximately 6,583, or 4.38%, of the 150,225 tests administered in New York on April 4 were positive for COVID-19.
 - As of April 4, New York has administered 10,480,155 doses of the vaccines to patients. 33.3% of New York residents have received at least one dose of the vaccines and 20.7% are fully vaccinated.
 - Beginning April 7, New York will [launch](#) the “Roll Up Your Sleeve” ad campaign to encourage all New Yorkers, especially those from neighborhoods with disproportionately high infection rates, to receive a COVID-19 vaccination. This effort

comes as New York expands vaccine eligibility to all New Yorkers 16-years-of-age and older starting April 6.

- New York State will [open](#) 18 more community-based, pop-up vaccination sites throughout the State from April 2 – 9. Each site will administer first dose vaccines for 1 – 2 days at a time, depending upon the location, and then close. The sites will then reopen three weeks after their respective closing date to administer second doses. Governor Cuomo expects these sites to vaccinate around 8,500 people.
- On April 2, New York [allowed](#) performing arts and entertainment venues to reopen at 33% capacity. Venues can host up to 100 people indoors or up to 200 people outdoors. If all attendees present proof of completed vaccination or recent negative COVID-19 test result, capacity can increase up to 150 people indoors or up to 500 people outdoors. New York still requires venues to enforce social distancing, face coverings, and health screening for all attendees, as well as strict adherence to New York Department of Health [guidance](#).
- On April 1, Governor Cuomo [announced](#) that a production issue at a Johnson & Johnson facility in Baltimore may have impacted millions of doses of their COVID-19 vaccine. However, Governor Cuomo assured New Yorkers that “next week’s allocation will not be impacted and all appointments scheduled at State-run mass vaccination sites will be honored.”

New York City

- [New York City COVID-19 Updates](#), April 5
 - On April 5, Mayor de Blasio [announced](#) that New York City will end the “two-case” rule in public schools. Previously, this rule required closure when a school reported two or more COVID-19 cases within the same week. Buildings would close for an initial 24 hours and if no link was identified between the cases, then the school would remain closed for ten days. Mayor de Blasio commented that the City will announce a replacement rule in the coming days.
 - According to New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, COVID variants [accounted](#) for over 70% of the cases [sequenced](#) during the week of March 15 – 21—an increase of almost 30% from the prior week. As of April 5, five “variants of concern” have been detected in New York City, according to the New York City Public Health Laboratory (PHL) and the New York City Pandemic Response Laboratory (PRL).

International

- Today, [India](#) recorded over 100,000 new daily COVID-19 cases for the first time since the pandemic began over one year ago. It is only the second country, after the United States, to cross that threshold. India is vaccinating more than 3 million people each day.
- Also today, [British](#) Prime Minister Boris Johnson unveiled certain re-opening plans, including free, twice-weekly COVID-19 testing and vaccination certificates to allow people to participate in events where social distancing is difficult, e.g., sporting events or events at nightclubs.
- [Bangladesh](#) began a weeklong lockdown on Monday, following a precipitous rise in cases.
- In [France](#), prosecutors are investigating government officials accused of dining in “secret” restaurants in violation of COVID-19 restrictions.

- After nearly two months with no local COVID-19 infections, [China](#) is working to contain a small outbreak near its border with Myanmar. The center of the outbreak, Ruili, is the main crossing point from Myanmar into Yunnan Province. Authorities are attempting to vaccinate the city's 300,000 residents within five days.
- Health leaders in [Ivory Coast](#) are concerned that thousands of COVID-19 vaccine doses could expire due to a lack of demand for the shots. In late February, the country received 500,000 doses through the COVAX initiative, but since then, only 40,000 doses have been administered. The doses expire in September.

Other Updates

- [*Millions of White Evangelicals Do Not Intend to Get Vaccinated*](#), April 5
 - According to a study by Pew Research Center that examined Americans' intent to get vaccinated by religion and race, white evangelicals are the least likely demographic to get a COVID-19 vaccine. Of the 41 million Americans within that demographic group, about 45% said they would not get vaccinated.
 - Americans that identified as “nothing in particular” and Black Protestants are the next least likely demographics to get vaccinated, at 36% and 33%, respectively.
 - The demographic groups that are most likely to get vaccinated are atheists (10 percent will not get the vaccine) and agnostics (20 percent will not get the vaccine).

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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