COVID-19 Newsletter (vol. 60)

Center for Disaster Medicine, New York Medical College

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Tuesday, February 23, 2021

During this COVID-19 pandemic and other future events, the CDM has been and will continue to be a source of reliable information, education and models for mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. We hope this informational document has helped provide you filtered and actionable information. As the pace of new information and changes occur, we will evaluate the current once per week to determine if this information should be provided on a more frequent basis.

David Markenson, M.D., M.B.A.
Director
Center for Disaster Medicine

**COVID-19 Statistics**

<p>| Total Cases | Total Deaths | Total Recovered | Total Tested |
|-------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Worldwide</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>New Jersey</th>
<th>New York</th>
<th>Connecticut</th>
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<td>28,190,403</td>
<td>769,109</td>
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<td>Not Available</td>
<td>74,109</td>
<td>142,724</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Available</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Information as of 2/23/21 at 0400 EST. Source: [https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html](https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html)

**United States COVID-19 Case Map / GIS**

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**Center for Disaster Medicine Updates**

- Coordinated and offered public safety course entitled “Prevention of and Response to Suicide Bombing Incidents.”
- Coordinating and overseeing COVID-19 screenings at NYMC campus.
- Continue to partner with local agencies such as Westchester Department of Emergency Services to ensure ongoing collaboration with all public safety agencies.
- Coordinating volunteers to support local public health response to COVID-19.
- Conducting research and analysis of current events and COVID-19 response to identify strengths and areas for improvement in other regions.
- Updating and developing new programs to provide enhanced education on public health emergencies including pandemics.
- Exploring course development opportunities in infection prevention and control for frontline responders in the hospital and in the field.
- Serving as a source of information for COVID-19 related concerns or questions regarding public health, emergency medical service (EMS), public safety and healthcare response.
- Local networking and pandemic response analysis for New York’s tri-state area, using first-person experiences to highlight current trends.
- COVID-19 Vaccines: Virtual Q & A Session.

To view the Center for Disaster Medicine's newest webinar, please click here - The COVID-19 Vaccine: What to Tell Your Patients
**The White House**

The official website of the White House delivers bold action and immediate relief for American families as the country grapples with converging crises. This will include actions to control the COVID-19 pandemic, provide economic relief, tackle climate change, and advance racial equity and civil rights, as well as immediate actions to reform our immigration system and restore America’s standing in the world. [https://www.whitehouse.gov](https://www.whitehouse.gov)

**Health and Human Services (HHS)**

As part of President Biden’s National Strategy for the COVID-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is announcing new actions to expand COVID-19 testing capacity across the country. These actions will improve the availability of tests, including for schools and underserved populations; increase domestic manufacturing of tests and testing supplies; and better prepare the nation for the threat of variants by rapidly increasing virus genome sequencing. [https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/02/17/biden-administration-announces-actions-expand-covid-19-testing.html](https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/02/17/biden-administration-announces-actions-expand-covid-19-testing.html)


**National Institutes of Health (NIH)**

A new study funded by the National Institutes of Health will evaluate the effects of remdesivir in pregnant women who have been prescribed the drug to treat COVID-19. The study, which will be conducted at 17 sites in the continental United States and Puerto Rico, aims to determine how pregnant women metabolize the drug and whether there are any potential side effects. [https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-funds-study-evaluate-remdesivir-covid-19-pregnancy](https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-funds-study-evaluate-remdesivir-covid-19-pregnancy)

View the latest COVID-19 information from NIH [https://www.nih.gov/coronavirus](https://www.nih.gov/coronavirus)

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**United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA)**

As of February 19, 2021, 331 tests and sample collection devices are authorized by the FDA under emergency use authorizations (EUAs). These include 247 molecular tests and sample collection devices, 70 antibody tests, and 14 antigen tests. There are 37 molecular authorizations that can be used with home-collected samples. There is one
molecular prescription at-home test, one antigen prescription at-home test, and one over-the-counter (OTC) at-home antigen test.


On February 22, 2021, the FDA issued guidance for medical product developers, specifically covering vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics products, to address the emergence and potential future emergence of variants of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.


After more than a year since the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak was declared a global health emergency, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention continue to underscore that there is no credible evidence of food or food packaging associated with or as a likely source of viral transmission of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), the virus causing COVID-19.


For the latest overall FDA information about COVID-19


**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

CDC is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic by learning more about how the disease spreads and affects people and communities. CDC’s Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report publishes the results of COVID-19 outbreak investigations. CDC’s scientific journal Emerging Infectious Diseases has published dozens of studies by researchers studying COVID-19 since the pandemic began.


CDC provides update on COVID-19 cases caused by variants in the United States.


For daily updates of cases in United States


For the latest CDC information


**Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)**

View the latest information from CMS

Vaccines

In this section, vaccine-related information from various sources will be collected, reviewed, and tabulated here. As of February 23, 2021, the FDA has granted Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) only to Pfizer BioNTech and Moderna. As additional vaccines are granted EUA, information for those vaccines will also be included.

Supply from the Federal Government is extremely limited. Additional New Yorkers will become eligible as the vaccine supply increases. While the vaccination process is underway, every New Yorker should wear a mask, social distance and avoid small and large gatherings. Governor Cuomo revised the eligibility list of persons to include any New Yorker of any age with certain comorbidities and underlying conditions effective February 15, 2021.

https://covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/phased-distribution-vaccine#phase-1a---phase-1b

The new NYS DOH COVID-19 Vaccine Tracker Dashboard will update New Yorkers on the distribution of the vaccine including the number of doses received by the state, a breakdown of first or second doses, and the number of persons vaccinated with the first and second doses in each region.

https://covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/covid-19-vaccine-tracker

NYS DOH releases instructions for New York State-operated vaccination sites

https://covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/

For NYC DOHMH updated guidance regarding COVID-19 vaccine

https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-vaccines.page

The Vaccine Finder is a one-stop site for New Yorkers to find their nearest COVID-19 vaccination location. The Vaccine Finder can also provide New Yorkers with information to schedule vaccination appointments.

https://vaccinefinder.nyc.gov/

The National Forum on COVID-19 Vaccine is a virtual event (February 22-24) that will unite representatives from across the US government, with tribal, state, local, and territorial leaders and representatives from public health, healthcare systems, national and community-based non-governmental organizations, education, private industry, unions, and faith-based organizations. All have a role in supporting COVID-19 vaccination.


Two COVID-19 vaccines have received Emergency Use Authorization for administration in the United States. In preauthorization clinical trials, local and systemic reactions were reported; no serious safety problems were detected. Monitoring, conducted as part of the U.S. vaccination program, indicates reassuring safety profiles for COVID-19 vaccines. Local and systemic reactions were common; rare reports of anaphylaxis were received. No unusual or unexpected reporting patterns were detected. Health care providers and vaccine recipients can be reassured about the safety of Pfizer BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines. Counseling vaccine recipients to expect transient local and systemic reactions might ease concerns and encourage completion of the 2-dose vaccination series.
CDC provides overall US COVID-19 Vaccine, deliveries and administration, maps, charts, and data updated daily by 8 p.m. This section represents all vaccine partners including jurisdictional partner clinics, retail pharmacies, long-term care facilities, Federal Emergency Management Agency and Health Resources and Services Administration partner sites, and federal entity facilities. 
https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#vaccinations

CDC created this section regarding the Moderna vaccine to provide updated relevant information including side effects and safety data, clinical trials demographic statistics, and information on how the vaccine works. 

CDC created this section regarding the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine to provide updated relevant information including side effects and safety data, clinical trials demographic statistics, and information on how the vaccine works. 

HHS created this section to provide the latest information about COVID-19 vaccines. 

The Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER) at the FDA is monitoring the safety of authorized COVID-19 vaccines through both passive and active safety surveillance systems. CBER is doing so in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and other academic and large non-government healthcare data systems. 

**Educational Institution Information**

- **Higher Education**
  - Experts predict that despite falling case rates and the introduction of vaccines, the COVID-19 pandemic will be with us for months. While estimates vary, some scientists do not predict a return to the pre-2020 way of life within the next two years. What at first seemed like a matter of weeks has turned into a long haul. While “normal” (if it ever returns) may still be far off, college administrations are now saying that in fall of 2021, they’ll get as close as they can. More in-person instruction and more students on campus are the dominant themes of announcements about the upcoming term. 
    https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/02/19/colleges-promise-return-person-classes-fall

- **K-12**
  - Very young students falling behind during the coronavirus pandemic could face long-term achievement impacts. But Tennessee is turning to texting to keep these early learners on track. Since the Tennessee
Department of Education rolled out a curriculum-aligned Pre-K to 3 texting initiative in mid-January, there has been a "surge of interest" from families, said Lisa Coons, the department's chief of standards and materials. The program is offered on a first-come, first-served basis to districts, she said, and has been particularly helpful for rural families. https://www.k12dive.com/news/using-texts-to-boost-pre-k-to-3-learning-during-the-pandemic/594902/

- A new study from the University of Notre Dame published in the *Journal of Marketing Research* finds a correlation between increased internet access spending in school districts and improvements in academic performance — as well as potential disciplinary consequences. In their examination of data from more than 9,000 public schools in Texas between 2000 to 2014, as well as surveys of 3,924 parents, the study's coauthors found a $600,000 increase in annual internet access spending, for example, could produce a financial gain of approximately $820,000 to $1.8 million from test score increases, though losses from disciplinary problems could cost schools between $25,800 to $53,440 from lower attendance rates and administrative expenses related to suspensions and expulsions. While the researchers found increased internet access could lead to a rise in negative behaviors like cyberbullying, lead author Yixing Chen, an assistant professor of marketing at Notre Dame, suggests this highlights the need for strategic planning in internet investments, including online safety training and strong consideration of the boundaries of school access. https://www.k12dive.com/news/study-increased-internet-access-improves-achievement-district-finances/595246/

**Clinical Trials**

To view the latest information on 4,636 clinical trials regarding COVID-19


**American Red Cross**


**State Updates**
New York

- Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced sweeping nursing home reform legislation to increase transparency, hold nursing home operators accountable for misconduct and help ensure facilities are prioritizing patient care over profits as part of the 30-day amendments. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing health equity and access to care issues among all communities, however, the State's minority communities and older adults have been disproportionately affected. These reforms would make permanent the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to improve the health and safety of nursing home residents, as well as the quality of services in nursing home facilities. [https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-sweeping-nursing-home-reform-legislation-part-30-day-amendments](https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-sweeping-nursing-home-reform-legislation-part-30-day-amendments)

- Governor Cuomo announced that the New York State Department of Health will allow visitation of residents in nursing home facilities in accordance with CMS and CDC guidelines. The Department of Health recommends that visitors take a rapid test before entry into the facility, and DOH will provide rapid tests to nursing homes at no cost. Guidance on visitations will be available beginning Monday, February 22. [https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-nursing-home-visitations-resume-accordance-cms-and-cdc-guidelines](https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-nursing-home-visitations-resume-accordance-cms-and-cdc-guidelines)

- Governor Cuomo released updated guidance for infection rates and testing protocols on college campuses. Colleges and universities testing at least 25 percent of total on-campus students, faculty and staff weekly will not be required to go on pause unless their positivity rate exceeds 5 percent during a rolling 14-day period. Colleges and Universities not testing at least 25 percent of their population weekly must go on pause if they have 100 individuals test positive or their positivity rate exceeds 5 percent - whichever is less - during a rolling 14-day period. This updated guidance will encourage more testing on campuses while allowing schools to better pinpoint and isolate problems before requiring a shift to remote learning so they don't have to disrupt in-person instruction for everyone. [https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-releases-updated-guidance-infection-rates-and-testing-protocols-college-campuses](https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-releases-updated-guidance-infection-rates-and-testing-protocols-college-campuses)

- Governor Cuomo announced the opening dates and scheduling information for the six community-based vaccination sites being established through a partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Specifically, the sites located in Brooklyn and Queens will begin vaccinations on Wednesday, February 24, with the Buffalo, Rochester, Albany and Yonkers sites slated to begin vaccinations on March 3. The Queens and Brooklyn sites will operate between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. every day. The Brooklyn and Queens sites each have the capacity to administer 3,000 doses every day, while the sites in Buffalo, Rochester, Albany and Yonkers have the capacity to administer 1,000 doses per day. [https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-opening-dates-and-scheduling-information-state-fema-vaccination-sites](https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-opening-dates-and-scheduling-information-state-fema-vaccination-sites)

- Governor Cuomo announced that as New York's hospitalization and COVID-19 infection rates continue to decline, New York is issuing guidance to begin re-opening additional sectors of the economy. Specifically, billiard halls statewide and movie theaters in New York City are now permitted to re-open. Additionally, guidance is also being released for weddings and catered events which are scheduled to resume on March 15. [https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-additional-re-opening-guidance-several-industries-new-yorks](https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-additional-re-opening-guidance-several-industries-new-yorks)

- Governor Cuomo announced new, expanded guidelines for visitation of residents in nursing home facilities in accordance with CMS and CDC guidelines to begin on February 26. The Department of Health recommends that visitors take a rapid test
before entry into the facility, and DOH will provide rapid tests to nursing homes to facilitate their ability to test visitors on-site and at no cost. Visitation continues to depend on the nursing home facility being free of COVID-19 cases for 14 days and the facility is not currently conducting outbreak testing. https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-expanded-guidelines-nursing-home-visitations

New York State Department of Health (DOH)

For a list of positive cases by county in New York State


NYS DOH has created a dynamic COVID-19 Tracker which provides COVID-19 information regarding testing, cases, percentages, and fatalities across New York State. It also breaks down cases by county.


For the latest COVID-19 information from NYS DOH

https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home

New Jersey

- Governor Phil Murphy signed Executive Order No. 222. The Order extends the Public Health Emergency that was declared on March 9, 2020 through Executive Order No. 103, which was previously extended in 2020 on April 7, May 6, June 4, July 2, August 1, August 27, September 25, October 24, November 22, and December 21, and again in 2021 on January 19. Under the Emergency Health Powers Act, a declared public health emergency expires after 30 days unless renewed. https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-222.pdf

- Governor Murphy and New Jersey Department of Education (DOE) Acting Commissioner Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan announced “The Road Forward,” a series of coordinated policy initiatives that dramatically expand the Administration's efforts to identify and address the academic and mental health impacts of COVID-19 on New Jersey students and educators. As part of this coordinated initiative, $1.2 billion in federal COVID-19 relief funds will be made available to districts, including grants dedicated specifically to research-based instructional and mental health interventions. Additionally, the Governor and Acting Commissioner announced that the Administration is seeking public comment and will submit a request to the U.S. Department of Education (USED) to waive federal requirements to administer statewide assessments
this spring.

Governor Murphy announced Executive Order No. 225, which increases capacity limits for religious services and large sports and entertainment venues. Additionally, limited spectators will be allowed at collegiate sporting events, mirroring last week’s announcement on youth sporting events. [https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-225.pdf](https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-225.pdf)

**Connecticut**

- In a continued effort to meet public health needs relating to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Ned Lamont, The Mohegan Tribe, and Yale New Haven Health System announced plans to open a large-scale community vaccination site at Mohegan Sun. The clinic was scheduled to open on Friday, February 19, 2021, and was to be located at Mohegan Sun’s Earth Expo & Convention Center. It will operate on an appointment-only basis, weather permitting, and is available for Connecticut residents. On the first day of operations, the clinic was expected to serve up to 300 Connecticut residents with the ability to increase vaccine distribution based on availability. Additional appointments will be added regularly as more supply of the vaccine becomes available by the federal government. It will operate in accordance with existing state rules and procedures relating to the vaccine eligibility. [https://portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Governor/News/Press-Releases/2021/02-2021/Governor-Lamont-Announces-Launch-of-Mass-COVID-19-Vaccine-Clinic-at-Mohegan-Sun](https://portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Governor/News/Press-Releases/2021/02-2021/Governor-Lamont-Announces-Launch-of-Mass-COVID-19-Vaccine-Clinic-at-Mohegan-Sun)

- Governor Lamont announced that his administration is partnering with Health Equity Solutions on an outreach program to ensure the state makes contact with as many people as possible with information about the COVID-19 vaccine, particularly among communities that have historically been disproportionately impacted in access to health care. The nonprofit organization, which is based in Hartford, advocates and promotes policies, programs, and practices that result in equitable health care access, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Under the partnership, Health Equity Solutions has developed a plan to reach more than 10,000 people of color living in Connecticut over a three-month span to share facts and dispel myths about the COVID-19 vaccine. It will focus on faith-based and education-based networks to reach the widest audiences throughout Connecticut, and in particular will address issues concerning distrust of the medical system within the African-American community. [https://portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Governor/News/Press-Releases/2021/02-2021/Governor-Lamont-Announces-Partnership-With-Health-Equity-Solutions](https://portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Governor/News/Press-Releases/2021/02-2021/Governor-Lamont-Announces-Partnership-With-Health-Equity-Solutions)

- In an effort to ensure that Connecticut continues taking the most equitable and efficient approach to quickly administering the COVID-19 vaccine to as many people as possible, Governor Lamont announced that the state will continue with an age-based approach to expanding eligibility to the vaccine, explaining that other previously considered scenarios proved overly complex and confusing, would potentially exacerbate inequities in vaccine distribution, and slow down the process of providing it to Connecticut residents. Age is one of the strongest factors contributing to COVID-19 deaths, with 96 percent of COVID-19 deaths in Connecticut occurring in people over the age of 55. [https://portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Governor/News/Press-Releases/2021/02-2021/Governor-Lamont-Announces-Connecticut-Will-Continue-Age-Based-Approach-To-COVID-Vaccine](https://portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Governor/News/Press-Releases/2021/02-2021/Governor-Lamont-Announces-Connecticut-Will-Continue-Age-Based-Approach-To-COVID-Vaccine)
New York Blood Center (NYBC)

Due to frequent winter storms and cold temperatures, New York’s blood supply is dangerously low. With record-setting storms and freezing temperatures, New York is experiencing a severe strain on the blood supply. Since last March, New York has suffered from a chronic deficit in blood donations as nearly all high schools, colleges, offices, and other community groups have had to cancel their blood drives. The winter weather has made collecting blood even more difficult amid the pandemic. [https://www.nybc.org/news/articles/due-frequent-winter-storms-and-cold-temperatures-new-yorks-blood-supply-dangerously-low/](https://www.nybc.org/news/articles/due-frequent-winter-storms-and-cold-temperatures-new-yorks-blood-supply-dangerously-low/)

For the latest updated NYBC information about COVID-19: [https://nybc.org/covid-19/](https://nybc.org/covid-19/)
New York City (NYC) Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)

For NYC DOHMH updated COVID-19 data page
https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-data.page

For the latest COVID-19 information from NYC DOHMH
https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-main.page

Westchester County Department of Health

For the latest breakdown of positive cases in Westchester County as of February 21, 2021
https://wcgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/280339d96db14efd9cc304db93a71d

For the latest COVID-19 information in Westchester including how to avoid the latest vaccine scams offering earlier access to vaccines.

Putnam County Department of Health

Breakdown of positive cases by towns in Putnam County as of February 8, 2021-

For the latest COVID-19 information
https://www.putnamcountyny.com/health/coronavirus/

Dutchess County Department of Health

Breakdown of positive cases in Dutchess County as of February 15, 2021-
https://dcny.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/8905f4428f3148d0b0bd5a2f3e4db11

For the latest COVID-19 information:

Orange County Department of Health

Updated COVID-19 dashboard for Orange County, NY as of February 19, 2021
https://ocnygis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/21de1fb5ce0c480f95dc0cf2b883b71

For the latest COVID-19 information

Rockland County Department of Health

Review Rockland County’s dashboard with the latest COVID-19 information regarding cases as of
February 22, 2021
https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/d074e0336e81449393a76d1768ceb096

For the latest COVID-19 information
Healthcare

GNYHA is pleased to announce the addition of COVID-19 monoclonal antibody treatment sites to Health Information Tool for Empowerment (HITE), our online resource directory. This new page lists treatment sites accepting referrals from the community for monoclonal antibody therapy. Monoclonal antibody therapies are used to treat non-hospitalized patients with mild or moderate COVID-19 meeting certain high-risk criteria. Patients or providers can visit the HITE Monoclonal Antibody Treatment page and find the address and contact information for sites offering these therapeutics organized by county. Listings provide referral information, including whether the site accepts emergency department walk-ins, if onsite testing is available, and whether patients can self-refer.

For the latest COVID-19 information for healthcare facilities from the Greater New York Hospital Association that covers hospitals in the tri-state area.

https://www.gnyha.org/
Pfizer launches first COVID-19 vaccine trial for pregnant women
CBS News
2/19/2021
https://www.cbsnews.com/news/covid-vaccine-pregnant-women-pfizer-trial/
Robert G. Lahita, M.D., Ph.D., professor of medicine

Doctor on reopening schools and COVID vaccines during pregnancy
CBS News
2/12/2021
Robert G. Lahita, M.D., Ph.D., professor of medicine

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