3-23-2021

COVID-19 Newsletter (vol. 64)

Center for Disaster Medicine, New York Medical College

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Tuesday, March 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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Cases</th>
<th>Total Deaths</th>
<th>Total Recovered</th>
<th>Total Tested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worldwide</td>
<td>123,627,191</td>
<td>2,722,203</td>
<td>70,092,839</td>
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<td>United States</td>
<td>29,867,412</td>
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<td>382,222,468</td>
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<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>299,667</td>
<td>7,841</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
<td>6,877,464</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information as of 3/23/21 at 0000 EDT. Source: [https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html](https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html)

**United States COVID-19 Case Map / GIS**
Center for Disaster Medicine Updates

- Delivered All Hazards Disaster Response course to members of different public safety agencies from New York and Connecticut.
- Presented invited lecture regarding COVID-19 response and best practices to graduate students enrolled in Master in Homeland Security degree in Guatemala.
- 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.

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

Federal
- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and American Red Cross announced a partnership to boost volunteer recruitment efforts for the department’s Compassionate Contact Corps program, which provides companionship to Veterans experiencing social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The program allows physicians, chaplains, nurses and social workers to pair volunteers with Veterans who are experiencing loneliness, are at risk for social isolation or could benefit from a companion. https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5643
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 includes 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)

In the 11 years since it became law, the Affordable Care Act has saved lives, brought down health care costs, and expanded Medicaid to our most vulnerable neighbors. The lifesaving law has been a game changer, protecting roughly 133 million people with pre-existing conditions and extending quality, affordable health care to millions more according to a statement by HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra on the anniversary of the Affordable Care Act. [https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/03/22/statement-hhs-secretary-xavier-becerra-anniversary-affordable-care-act.html](https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/03/22/statement-hhs-secretary-xavier-becerra-anniversary-affordable-care-act.html)


National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Results from a large clinical trial in the United States and South America indicate that AstraZeneca’s COVID-19 vaccine, AZD1222, is well-tolerated and protects against symptomatic COVID-19 disease, including severe disease or hospitalization. The independent Data and Safety Monitoring Board (DSMB) overseeing the trial identified no safety concerns related to the vaccine. The United Kingdom-based global biopharmaceutical company AstraZeneca developed the vaccine and led the trial as regulatory sponsor. [https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/investigational-astrazeneca-vaccine-prevents-covid-19](https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/investigational-astrazeneca-vaccine-prevents-covid-19)

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)

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued an emergency use authorization (EUA) for the first machine learning-based Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) non-diagnostic screening device that identifies certain biomarkers that are indicative of some types of
conditions, such as hypercoagulation (a condition causing blood to clot more easily than normal).


As of March 19, 2021, 341 tests and sample collection devices are authorized by the FDA under emergency use authorizations (EUAs). These include 254 molecular tests and sample collection devices, 72 antibody and other immune response tests, and 15 antigen tests. There are 38 molecular authorizations that can be used with home-collected samples. There is one molecular prescription at-home test, two antigen prescription at-home test, one over-the-counter (OTC) at-home antigen test, and one OTC molecular test.


The U.S. Food and Drug Administration granted marketing authorization of the BioFire Respiratory Panel 2.1 (RP2.1), a diagnostic test for the simultaneous qualitative detection and identification of multiple respiratory viral and bacterial nucleic acids in nasopharyngeal swabs (NPS) obtained from individuals suspected of COVID-19 and other respiratory tract infections.


For the latest overall FDA information about COVID-19.


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

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is updating K–12 school guidance to reflect the latest science on physical distance between students in classrooms. CDC now recommends that, with universal masking, students should maintain a distance of at least three feet in classroom settings.


The CDC announced a plan to invest $2.25 billion over two years to address Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)-related health disparities and advance health equity among populations that are at high-risk and underserved, including racial and ethnic minority groups and people living in rural areas. This funding represents CDC’s largest investment to date to support communities affected by COVID-19-related health disparities.


The emerging variants CDC is closely monitoring have mutations in the virus genome that alter the characteristics and cause the virus to act differently in ways that are significant to public health (e.g., causes more severe disease, spreads more easily between humans, requires different treatments, changes the effectiveness of current vaccines). It is
important to understand that genetic mutations are expected, and some variants can spread and become predominant while others subside. 

CDC provides daily data tracker which has maps and charts tracking cases, deaths, and trends of COVID-19 in the United States- updated daily by 8 pm ET. 
https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home

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 March 23, 2021, the FDA has granted Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) to Pfizer BioNTech, Moderna and Janssen/Johnson & Johnson. Now with three vaccines with EUA, the goal is to vaccinate a larger number of persons in the coming months throughout the United States. As additional vaccines are granted EUA, information for those vaccines will also be included.

CDC provides update on “How to talk about COVID-19 vaccines with friends and family.” COVID-19 vaccines are new, and it's normal to for people to have questions about them. The sheer amount of information—and misinformation—about COVID-19 vaccines can be overwhelming to anyone. 

CDC provides overall U.S. COVID-19 Vaccine, deliveries and administration, maps, charts, and data updated daily by 8 PM. 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 Johnson & Johnson’s Janssen 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 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.

On March 22, 2021, New York State Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced the launch of the "Roll Up Your Sleeve" Campaign to promote houses of worship of all faiths across the state to sign up as vaccination sites for their communities. All houses of worship can begin to serve as points of distribution for the COVID-19 vaccine starting in April, significantly increasing the number of doses they can administer. As part of this new campaign, medical providers are being asked to volunteer to partner with houses of worship to conduct vaccination clinics, furthering the state's commitment to ensure fairness and equity in the vaccine distribution process.

On March 22, 2021, Governor Cuomo announced that starting on March 23 at 8 a.m., New Yorkers 50 years of age and older will be eligible to receive the vaccine. 103,425 doses have been administered across New York's vast distribution network in the last 24 hours, and more than 1 million doses have been administered over the past seven days. More than 1.65 million doses have been administered through New York mass vaccination sites and FEMA sites to date. Delivery of the week 15 allocation begins mid-week.

On March 21, 2021, Governor Cuomo announced new guidance has been rolled out allowing pharmacies to vaccinate New Yorkers with comorbidities. Pharmacies were previously able to vaccinate New Yorkers over the age of 60 and teachers.

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/

**Educational Institution Information**

- Higher Education
  - The Education Department announced that students who were cheated by for-profit institutions and previously granted partial relief on their direct federal loans will now be granted full relief. The department is rolling back a controversial formula -- established under the previous secretary, Betsy DeVos -- that gave some borrowers only partial debt forgiveness, even if it was found that they were defrauded or misled by their college. The change will help 72,000 borrowers with previously approved “borrower-defense” claims, department officials said, and will result in an additional $1 billion in debt forgiveness, on top of any debt forgiveness those borrowers previously received.
  
  https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/03/19/education-department-cancels-1-billion-debt-defrauded-students

- K-12
  - The quick and safe reopening of K-12 schools this spring is the U.S. Department of Education’s greatest priority, said Education Secretary Miguel Cardona during a press call Wednesday, the same day state education leaders received notices of their funding allocations under the federal American Rescue Plan. The $122.8 billion in funding for K-12 schools should target the impacts from COVID-19 in PreK-12, particularly for programs that help students who need the most support, according to Cardona’s letter to state leaders. The ARP funds, which will be sent to states this month, can also be spent on safety protocols, hiring of additional staff and teachers, extended learning programs and more. Also on Wednesday, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will provide $10 billion to states to help fund COVID-19 testing for K-12 teachers, staff and students. Those allocations will be made in early April, according to HHS.
  

  - COVID-19 has impacted the way educators and experts think about assessments, from some suggesting testing be delayed to redesigning the tests. By rethinking assessments, educators can also expand student choice. One method of bringing student choice into assessment expands on the idea of UDL, or universal design for learning, which provides flexible learning environments to accommodate the needs of all students. In this manner, students can choose the format they show what they’ve learned to their teacher, selecting an oral presentation over a written one, for example, or the way they’re graded.
Clinical Trials

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

American Red Cross


State Updates

New York

- Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the Reimagine New York Commission announced the launch of ConnectED NY, an emergency fund to provide approximately 50,000 students in economically disadvantaged school districts with free internet access through June 2022. Funding will be provided by Schmidt Futures and the Ford Foundation and the program will be managed by Digital Promise, a non-profit which is dedicated to closing the digital learning gap. [https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-launch-connected-ny-fund-provide-no-cost-internet-access-50000](https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-launch-connected-ny-fund-provide-no-cost-internet-access-50000)
- Governor Cuomo announced the New York Forward COVID-Safe Offices partnership with major commercial real estate partners to expand access to COVID-19 testing for employers. As part of the initiative, 21 participating landlords have committed to provide space and facilitate access to testing services for tenants interested in conducting regular diagnostic testing of their employees. [https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-new-york-forward-covid-safe-offices-partnership-expand-access-testing](https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-new-york-forward-covid-safe-offices-partnership-expand-access-testing)
- Governor Cuomo announced the discovery of the first case of a COVID-19 P.1 variant, commonly referred to as the Brazilian variant, in a New York State resident. The case was identified by scientists at Mount Sinai hospital in New York City and verified by the Department of Health's Wadsworth Center Laboratories. The patient is a Brooklyn resident in their 90s with no travel history. DOH is working with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to learn more information about the patient and potential contacts. [https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-discovery-first-brazilian-variant-new-york-state-resident](https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-discovery-first-brazilian-variant-new-york-state-resident)
- Governor Cuomo today announced the launch of the “Roll Up Your Sleeve” Campaign to promote houses of worship of all faiths across the state to sign up as vaccination sites for their communities. All houses of worship can begin to serve as points of distribution for the COVID vaccine starting in April, significantly increasing the number of doses they can administer. As part of this new campaign, medical providers are being asked to
volunteer to partner with houses of worship to conduct vaccination clinics, furthering the state's commitment to ensure fairness and equity in the vaccine distribution process. This campaign builds on the state's efforts to bring the vaccine to underserved communities and combat vaccine hesitancy through houses of worship. The Governor previously encouraged religious leaders of all faiths to partner with the state to establish pop-up vaccination sites at their facilities, and since March 8, over 200 new houses of worship have signed up to serve their communities. Houses of worship of all faiths are eligible to serve as points of distribution for the COVID vaccine.


- Governor Cuomo announced that starting March 23 at 8 a.m., New Yorkers 50 years of age and older will be eligible to receive the vaccine. 103,425 doses have been administered across New York's vast distribution network in the last 24 hours, and more than 1 million doses have been administered over the past seven days. More than 1.65 million doses have been administered through New York mass vaccination sites and FEMA sites to date. Delivery of the week 15 allocation begins mid-week. https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-new-yorkers-50-years-age-and-older-will-be-eligible-receive-covid-19

### New York State Department of Health (DOH)

On March 22, 2021, Governor Cuomo provided a COVID-19 update. "We're working 24/7 to vaccinate as many New Yorkers as quickly as possible, but new variants are spreading across the state and it's critical for residents to continue practicing safe behaviors," Governor Cuomo said. "We've expanded eligibility and opened new vaccination sites to serve more New Yorkers faster, and we'll continue to stay focused on those efforts going forward. New Yorkers can get through the COVID-19 pandemic together, but it's going to take more effort to keep residents and families safe and healthy."


On March 19, 2021, Governor Cuomo announced the New York Forward COVID-Safe Offices partnership with major commercial real estate partners to expand access to COVID-19 testing for employers. As part of the initiative, 21 participating landlords have committed to provide space and facilitate access to testing services for tenants interested in conducting regular diagnostic testing of their employees.


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.

New Jersey

- New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy signed Executive Order 232, which will rescind the current prohibition on outdoor interstate youth competitions, effective 6:00 a.m. on Friday, March 19. Attendees at outdoor sports competitions will be limited to players, coaches, and officials, and up to two parents or guardians per participating athlete. No additional spectators or attendees will be allowed. All persons in attendance at youth sports competitions must follow all health and safety protocols for sports activities, which require attendees to wear masks and social distance, and athletes to wear masks when not engaged in activity. The prohibition on indoor sports competitions remains in effect. [https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-232.pdf](https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-232.pdf)
- Governor Murphy, Treasurer Elizabeth Muoio, Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee Chairman Paul Sarlo, and Assembly Budget Committee Chairwoman Eliana Pintor Marin announced that the state income tax filing and payment due date for individuals for the 2020 tax year will be automatically extended from April 15, 2021 to May 17, 2021 to mirror actions taken by the IRS. The extension was made under the authority of the Department of Treasury’s Director of the Division of Taxation. Formal guidance will be provided in the coming days. This extension applies to individual taxpayers, including individuals who pay self-employment tax. However, unlike last year, first quarter 2021 individual estimated tax payments are not being extended and will still be due on April 15. No additional forms are required to qualify for this extension. [https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562021/approved/20210319c.shtml](https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562021/approved/20210319c.shtml)

Connecticut

The Connecticut Department of Revenue Services announced that the filing and payment deadline for Connecticut individual income tax returns is being extended to Monday, May 17, 2021. The extension aligns the state with recent announcement by the U.S. Department of the Treasury to extend the deadline for federal returns to the same

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**Local Updates**

**New York Blood Center (NYBC)**

New York Blood Center (NYBC) announced a blood shortage in the region, one year after New York was the epicenter of the pandemic. Before COVID-19, donors could stop by community blood drives at convenient locations like high schools, colleges, and offices. It has been one year since these groups had to cancel their blood drives due to COVID-19 and few have been able to resume these life-saving events. [https://www.nybc.org/news/articles/new-york-blood-center-announces-blood-emergency-one-year-pandemic/](https://www.nybc.org/news/articles/new-york-blood-center-announces-blood-emergency-one-year-pandemic/)

New York Blood Center (NYBC) has published an analysis in *Science* magazine that points to the vaccines’ efficacy against mutated strains of COVID-19. While the mutated strains of COVID-19 are concerning, NYBC found that existing research indicates all three FDA-approved vaccines--Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, and Moderna--create enough antibodies to fight the virus variants.
For the latest updated NYBC information about COVID-19:
https://nybc.org/covid-19/

**New York City (NYC) Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)**

NYC DOHMH issues Health Advisory #4: Updated Guidance for Use of Respirators by Health Care Personnel Caring for Patients With and Without COVID-19 in Health Care Settings

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 March 21, 2021
https://wcgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/280339d96db14efd9cc304dba0f3a71d

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 March 22, 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 March 22, 2021
https://dcny.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/8905f4428f3148d0bffd50a2f3e4db11

For the latest COVID-19 information:

**Orange County Department of Health**

Updated COVID-19 dashboard for Orange County, NY as of March 22, 2021
https://ocnygis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/21de1fb5ce0c480f95dc0cf2b8b83b71
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 March 22, 2021
https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/d074e0336e81449393a76d1768ceb096

For the latest COVID-19 information

Healthcare

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released updated guidance on COVID-19 TeleTracking reporting, introducing new fields for bamlanivimab/etesevimab use and on-hand supply. Hospitals can opt to submit the new fields on Wednesdays, starting March 24. The fields will be required beginning April 7. The guidance also makes the reuse of personal protective equipment field optional. Also, vaccine questions are adjusted to reflect single-dose or multiple-dose shots.

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/
Center for Disaster Medicine Media

New York Medical College Leadership News:
TSA screens over 1M travelers per day for 8 consecutive days
News 12 Hudson Valley
3/19/2021
https://hudsonvalley.news12.com/tsa-screens-over-1m-travelers-per-day-for-8-consecutive-days
Robert W. Amler, M.D., M.B.A., dean of the School of Health Sciences and Practice and vice president for government affairs

Faculty News:
A Loss for Words: How the U.S. Failed COVID-19 Communication
ContagionLive
3/17/2021
Neil W. Schluger, M.D., the Barbara and William Rosenthal Chair of the Department of Medicine
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This newsletter is for informational purposes only; it does not constitute medical advice. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

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