

The Latest COVID

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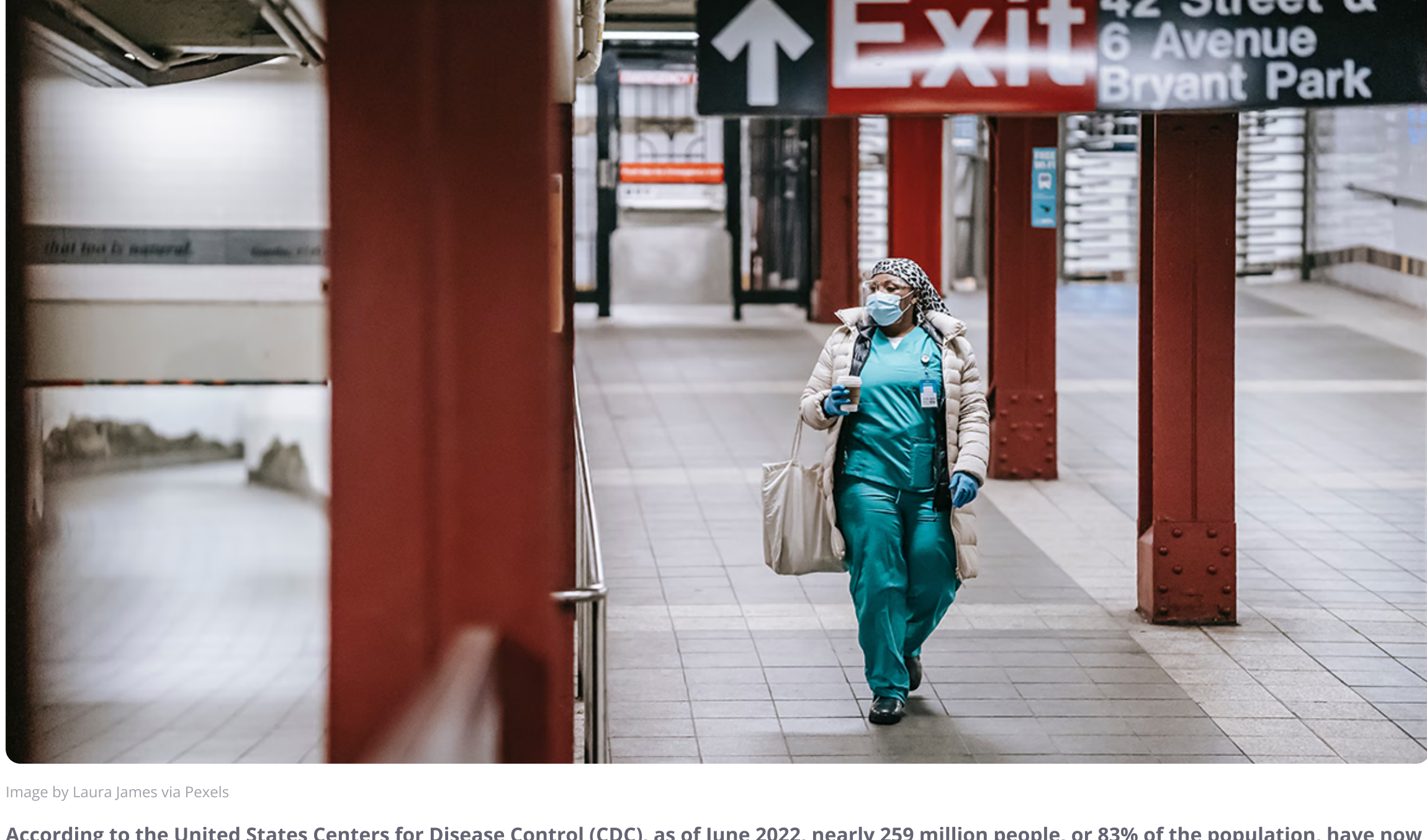
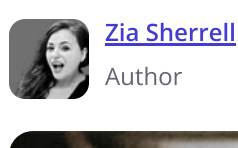


Image by Laura James via Pexels

According to the United States Centers for Disease Control (CDC), as of June 2022, nearly 259 million people, or 83% of the population, have now received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccination. As a result, hospitalization and death rates are dropping across the country. Still, cases are increasing, with a daily average of over 100,000 new infections — nearly five times higher than the average number of cases this time last year.

Although in many ways, the pandemic seems to be drawing to a close, the virus is still circulating, and people must remain vigilant. Here's a brief roundup of the latest COVID-19 news in the US.

Potential COVID-19 surge

The US recently celebrated Memorial Day and the unofficial start of summer. Experts are warning that following the three-day holiday weekend — one of the busiest travel periods of the year — there may be a sharp rise in new COVID-19 infections.

According to the [Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center](#), as of May 28, the seven-day average for new coronavirus cases was 119,725. In comparison, on May 28, 2021, the figure stood at just 17,887 cases. These figures might be even more alarming if the underreported results from at-home testing were included.

Cases are rising due to the slew of [Omicron subvariants currently circulating](#), fuelled by the lifting of restrictions and mask mandates.

Restrictions and mask mandates

All states have now lifted restrictions put in place during the pandemic. There are no longer requirements to wear masks in public places, although some states mandate masking in high-risk settings such as health care and long-term care facilities.

The nationwide mask order that applied to public transport, including planes, trains, and buses, was overturned by a federal judge on [April 18](#). As a result, face coverings are now optional. However, on May 3, the CDC reissued recommendations that all people wear masks while on public transportation and at transportation hubs such as airports and train stations.

Validation of 11th COVID vaccine

The [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) has validated a [11th COVID-19 vaccine](#) under emergency use listing (EUL). CanSino Biologics of China produced the vaccine, AD5-nCoV, trade-named Convidecia.

Convidecia is a genetically engineered viral vector vaccine. It uses adenovirus — a common virus that typically causes minor infections like the common cold. Scientists alter the adenovirus so it can't cause illness. They also insert a genetic snippet that codes for a particular spike protein from SARS-CoV-2 — the virus that causes COVID-19.

When someone is vaccinated, the adenovirus enters the cells, which then display the spike protein on their surface. The immune system recognizes this foreign protein and begins to make antibodies and other immune cells against the perceived infection. Should the immune system encounter SARS-CoV-2 in the future, it can mount a rapid and effective response.

Although Convidecia has demonstrated lower efficacy than other viral vector vaccines because it's a single-dose vaccine with standard refrigerator storage requirements, it's a practical option for many countries.

A possible explanation for complicated COVID-19 symptoms

Since the beginning of the pandemic, doctors have struggled to understand why some people with COVID-19 experience symptoms that can linger for months. However, a new [study](#) suggests that abnormal proteins called amyloids could offer insight into this phenomenon.

It appears that when the immune system interacts with the spike protein on the surface of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, [amyloid proteins are produced. These abnormal proteins can build up in the body, causing various health problems](#), including Alzheimer's disease, type II diabetes, and rheumatoid arthritis.

The research found that various S-protein or spike protein components of SARS-CoV-2 might contribute to amyloid production. It seems that when S-proteins combine with specific enzymes produced by neutrophils — a type of white blood cell — it breaks into smaller sections. These components could lead to the formation of amyloids.

Although this research hints that amyloid production could contribute to issues such as blood clots and neurodegenerative problems in COVID-19, more research would be beneficial. Particularly as this was a test-tube study rather than research on animal or human participants. However, the research provides a promising baseline for further research into the underlying mechanisms behind COVID-19 symptoms.

Long COVID remains an issue

Although it's been over 2 years since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, many survivors still report residual health problems. There are also reports of symptoms that reappear or begin months or even a year following the initial infection. Experts refer to these occurrences as 'long COVID'.

Researchers recently explored long COVID in a [study](#) that assessed almost 2,500 individuals discharged from a hospital in China in the first half of 2020. Concerningly, around 50% of these participants reported having at least one COVID-19 symptom 2 years after the initial, acute infection.

Long COVID symptoms, including muscle weakness, fatigue, and sleeping problems, negatively impact mental health, physical abilities, and overall quality of life while increasing the need for healthcare after discharge. In addition, some experts believe that this could result in a mass-disabling event in the future.

The consequences of long COVID may depend on various factors, including an individual's treatment while in hospital, the dose and variant of the virus, and how well their immune system responded to the infection. It's also likely that a person's vaccination status comes into play. It's important to remember that the participants in this study experienced COVID-19 before the development of vaccines, and experts are yet to understand what the future holds for COVID-19 survivors.

Potential COVID-19 rebound after taking Paxlovid

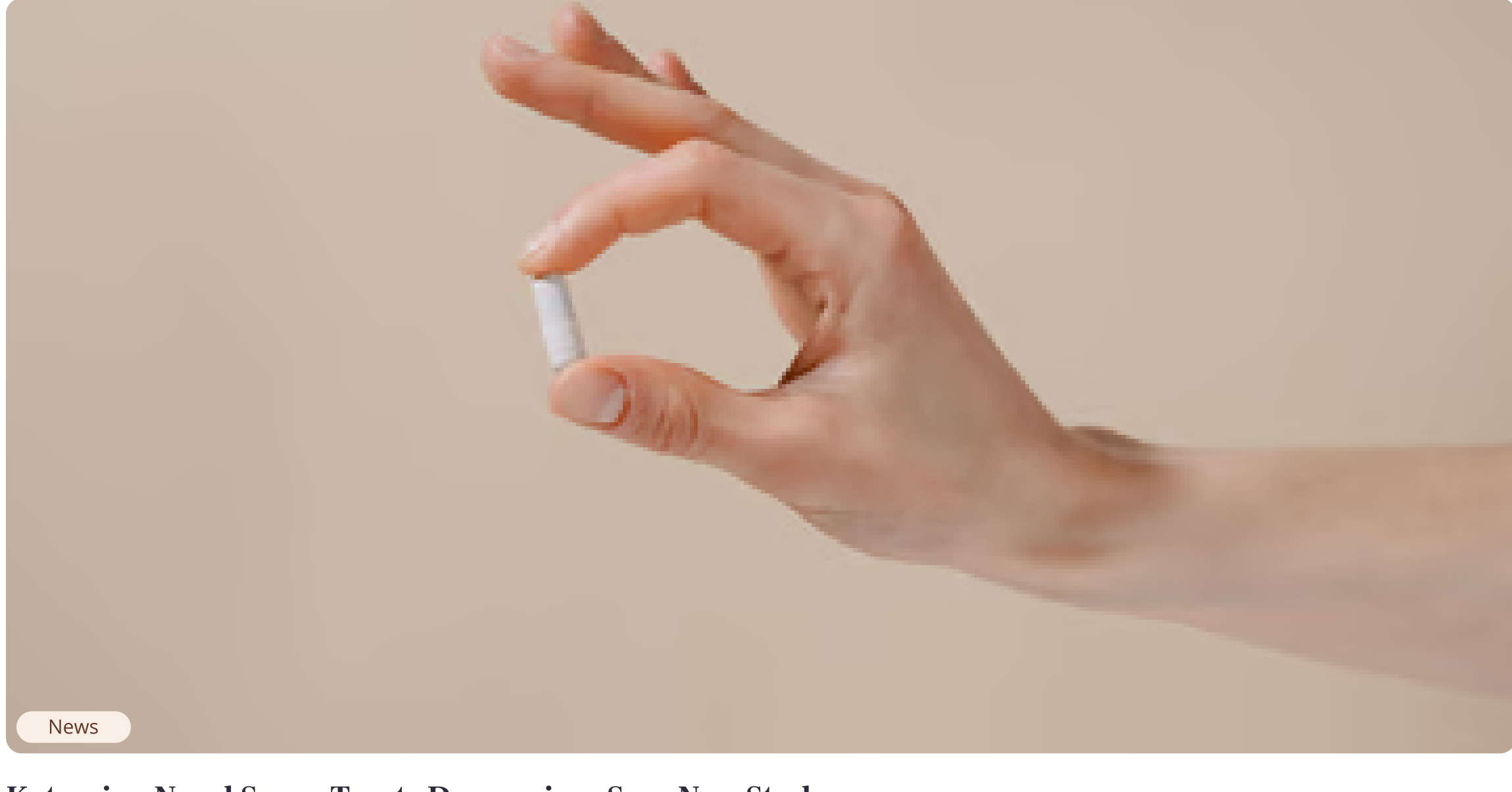
The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) has issued an advisory warning that people risk 'COVID-19 rebound' after taking a medication called [Paxlovid](#). This anti-viral drug manufactured by Pfizer is recommended for people infected with COVID-19 who have a high risk of developing severe disease.

COVID-19 rebound means that between 2 and 8 days after getting better, COVID-19 symptoms return, or the person tests positive for COVID-19, having previously tested negative. Although this is concerning, rebound COVID-19 generally has a milder course.

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