



## Kentucky Hospital Research & Education Foundation Emergency Preparedness Update for February 7, 2021

### More Than 4,000 Kentuckians Have Now Died Of COVID-19

(WFPL) Kentucky has surpassed another grim milestone in the coronavirus pandemic. Saturday Gov. Andy Beshear reported the state's death toll from COVID-19 has now reached more than 4,000 people. Beshear reported 49 new deaths, bringing total deaths to 4,020.

[The state marked 3,000 deaths](#) just weeks ago in mid-January.

The governor also reported another 1,998 new cases. The [state's seven-day average of new cases has been on the decline after a post-holiday surge](#). But public health officials are worried about Super Bowl gatherings becoming super-spreader events, and are warning people to avoid hosting or attending Super Bowl parties.

Across the state, 1,294 people are hospitalized with the virus. Of those people, 318 are in the ICU and 164 are on a ventilator. The state's positivity rate is 8.07%. Most counties remain in the red zone.

Source: <https://wfpl.org/more-than-4000-kentuckians-have-now-died-of-covid-19/>

Press release: <https://kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=GovernorBeshear&prId=592>

### Vaccine shipments to Kentucky health departments expected to pay dividends for rural communities

(WDRB) Just a day after the state of Kentucky [announced it would send every health department at least 100 weekly doses of the COVID-19 vaccine](#), health officials said it's critical for rural communities. The state's program adds to the eight regional vaccine sites that will be open soon. Each health department or district health department will receive enough doses to administer vaccinations to 1% of the population of each county they serve, rounded up to the nearest 100.

Read more: [https://www.wdrb.com/news/vaccine-shipments-to-kentucky-health-departments-expected-to-pay-dividends-for-rural-communities/article\\_50625b84-67fa-11eb-a7d3-3bc19614e79d.html](https://www.wdrb.com/news/vaccine-shipments-to-kentucky-health-departments-expected-to-pay-dividends-for-rural-communities/article_50625b84-67fa-11eb-a7d3-3bc19614e79d.html)

### Pfizer expects to cut COVID-19 vaccine production time by close to 50% as production ramps up, efficiencies increase

(USA Today) Pfizer expects to nearly cut in half the amount of time it takes to produce a batch of COVID-19 vaccine from 110 days to an average of 60 as it makes the process more efficient and production is built out, the company told USA TODAY.

As the nation revs up its vaccination programs, the increase could help relieve bottlenecks caused by vaccine shortages.

The increased speed and capacity is not unexpected, said Robert Van Exan, president of Immunization Policy and Knowledge Translation, a vaccine production consulting firm. "Nobody's ever produced mRNA vaccines at this scale, so you can bet your bottom dollar the manufacturers are learning as they go. I bet you every day they run into some vaccine challenge and every day they solve it, and that goes into their playbook," he said.

Full story: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2021/02/07/pfizer-expects-cut-covid-19-vaccine-production-time-almost-50/4423251001/>

### Independent pharmacies prep for COVID

Read more: <https://www.wkyt.com/app/2021/02/05/independent-kentucky-pharmacies-prepare-to-receive-covid-19-vaccines/>

### Kroger Offers \$100 Bonus To Employees Who Get Vaccinated

Learn more: <https://www.npr.org/2021/02/05/964660657/kroger-offers-100-bonus-to-employees-who-get-vaccinated>

### States are taking back unused Covid vaccine doses from nursing homes

Dozens of states and cities are clawing back thousands of extra doses of Covid-19 vaccine that were meant to be used by [CVS](#) and [Walgreens](#) to immunize residents of nursing homes through a federal partnership set up by the Trump administration. A combination of vaccine hesitancy, over-estimation of the number of doses needed for the campaign and other factors led to the program having too many shots, the CDC said. It's not clear exactly how many doses are being diverted from the program, but Illinois, for example, announced this week that it was taking 97,000 doses out of the program.

Full story: <https://www.cnn.com/2021/02/06/states-are-taking-back-unused-covid-vaccine-doses-from-nursing-homes-.html>

## **Dr. Fauci just confirmed something crucial everyone needs to know about the coronavirus vaccine**

As the COVID vaccination rollout in the U.S. continues to pick up steam, there are still a few pressing questions about the vaccine that remain unknown. Chief among them is whether or not someone who receives the vaccine can still spread the virus to others. The simple answer to this question is that it's too early to tell.

Touching on this issue during a recent appearance [on Today](#), Dr. Anthony Fauci explained that we need more time to conduct studies and to observe transmission rates over the next few weeks and months. "One of the things that we don't have enough information about, and we have to be humble and modest enough to recognize and admit is that we do not know the duration of the durability of protection from yourself to get reinfected as well as spreading to others," Fauci said. "We've gotta be able to, and we are, doing studies to answer those kinds of questions."

Full story: <https://bgr.com/2021/01/18/coronavirus-vaccine-fauci-herd-immunity-biden-plan/>  
CDC [statement](#) on this topic: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>

## **CDC scientists recall 'death by a thousand cuts' as they try to rebuild the agency's reputation**

Learn more: <https://www.cnn.com/2021/02/05/health/cdc-rebuilding-confidence/index.html>

## **Israel outpaced the world in vaccinations. Now it's seeing the results.**

(VOX) Israel has [outpaced the world](#) in vaccinating its population against [Covid-19](#). Now the results are starting to come in. And, so far, the news is good for both Israel and the world.

[Data](#) suggests that the pandemic is starting to slow in Israel. [Infections](#) and the number of seriously ill people are declining, [particularly among those over 60](#), one of the groups targeted in the early [rollout of the vaccination campaign](#).

The vaccine, out in the wild, is also [mirroring the results of clinical trials](#), which found the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine (the dose most Israelis have received so far) was about [95 percent effective in reducing infections](#).

Learn more: <https://www.vox.com/22262509/israel-covid-19-vaccinations-serious-illness-decline>

## **'Super antibodies' might be the biggest breakthrough of the coronavirus pandemic**

(BGR) The immune system is so sophisticated that it can recognize foreign elements that enter the body and mount a defense. With infectious pathogens like the novel coronavirus, the immune system develops antibodies that can neutralize the spike protein the virus would otherwise use to infect cells. COVID-19-specific B and T white blood cells are also created in the process, which will intervene in the future if reinfection occurs. Drugs like monoclonal antibodies and vaccines, as well as therapies involving plasma transfusions from COVID-19 survivors, have the same purpose — to neutralize the spike protein with antibodies. [Monoclonal drugs](#) and plasma lend patients antibodies that can work immediately against the virus in patients who were just infected. Vaccines won't benefit infected people, but they have a huge advantage over antibody drugs. Vaccines teach the immune system to create antibodies that will be useful down the road at preventing severe COVID-19. Moreover, the immune system will also make white blood cells ready to fuel an immediate response upon exposure to the real virus.

As expected, not all patients develop the same immune response to the virus, which explains why some people get milder COVID-19 cases while others experience severe complications. But it turns out that a small number of people can produce so-called "super antibodies" that are incredibly effective at neutralizing SARS-CoV-2. What's even more interesting is that they keep their powers even when diluted 10,000 times, and they can survive in the blood for many months after infection. This breakthrough discovery could lead to even better antibody-based therapies.

Full story: <https://bgr.com/2021/01/18/coronavirus-treatment-super-antibodies-study/>

## **Gottlieb expects new virus variant to dominate infections in U.S. in 5 weeks**

(CBS) Former Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Dr. Scott Gottlieb predicted Sunday that the new variant of the [coronavirus](#) discovered in the United Kingdom will be the dominant strain in the U.S. in a matter of weeks. In an interview with "Face the Nation," Gottlieb said the new variant is roughly 0.5% of all infections nationwide but said that likely will double each week.

"That's the experience from other countries and that's the experience we've seen so far in the United States," he told "Face the Nation." "So it's 1% now. It'll be 2%, then 4%, then 8%, then 16%, then 32%. So in about five weeks, this is going to start to take over."

Full CBS story: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/gottlieb-coronavirus-variant-us-infections-face-the-nation/>

**Related story - Variants, Vaccines and What They Mean For COVID-19 Testing**

(Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health) A few months ago, concerns about COVID-19 diagnostic testing were mostly a matter of test availability and whether the results would be returned in soon enough to make a public health difference. Now, emerging SARS-CoV-2 variants and the COVID-19 vaccination campaigns have increased complexity for COVID-19 testing. Many wonder if the tests will accurately diagnose infection with a variant strain of SARS-CoV-2, and whether vaccination will lead to inaccurate results with a diagnostic or serological test.

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**Hepatitis drug speeds recovery in non-hospitalized COVID-19 patients**

(UPI) -- A single injection of an experimental antiviral drug appears to speed recovery times in non-hospitalized patients with COVID-19, according to a study published Friday by [Lancet Respiratory Medicine](#).

In a phase 2 trial, testing whether the drug works for COVID-19 patients, those given peginterferon-lambda were four times as likely to have cleared the coronavirus infection within seven days. compared with those who received a placebo, the data showed.

The drug is being evaluated for the treatment of hepatitis D, a rare form of the liver disease, according to its manufacturer, Eiger Biopharmaceuticals, of Palo Alto, Calif.

Learn more: [https://www.upi.com/Health\\_News/2021/02/05/Study-Hepatitis-drug-speeds-recovery-in-non-hospitalized-COVID-19-patients/2171612552262/](https://www.upi.com/Health_News/2021/02/05/Study-Hepatitis-drug-speeds-recovery-in-non-hospitalized-COVID-19-patients/2171612552262/)

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**Brazil researchers find people infected with two different coronavirus strains**

(Reuters) Researchers in southern Brazil said they have discovered patients infected with two different strains of the new coronavirus simultaneously, reflecting concerns about the growing number of variants in the country. The researchers, who posted their findings Wednesday on medical website medRxiv, said their study would be the first in the world to confirm co-infection with two strains of the coronavirus. The study has yet to be published in a scientific journal and has not been peer reviewed.

Learn more: <https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-brazil-coinfection-idUSL1N2K320O>

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**CDC COVID-19: What's New Extracts**

- [Overall US COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution and Administration Update as of Sat, 06 Feb 2021 06:00:00 EST](#) Saturday, February 06, 2021
- [Meat and Poultry Processing Workers and Employers](#) Saturday, February 06, 2021
- [EARLY RELEASE: Decline in COVID-19 Hospitalization Growth Rates Associated with Statewide Mask Mandates - 10 States, March-October 2020](#) Friday, February 05, 2021
- [EARLY RELEASE: Observed Face Mask Use at Six Universities - United States, September-November 2020](#) Friday, February 05, 2021
- [Information for School Nurses and Other Healthcare Personnel \(HCP\) Working in Schools and Child Care Settings](#) Friday, February 05, 2021

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**The Weird Correlation Between S'mores and COVID**

<http://newser.com/s302190>

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**A deadly E. coli outbreak is hitting the US, and the source is unknown**

A multi-state E. coli outbreak is making people sick across the United States, and the Centers for Disease Control are working on identifying the source. The outbreak is tracked by the strain of the bacteria that is making people sick, and so far over a dozen people have fallen ill, including one death.

The most distressing part about this notice is that there's no recall associated with it, and CDC officials have yet to be able to track down the cause. This isn't necessarily out of the ordinary, as outbreaks tend to be identified before a cause is confirmed, but the fact that this strain of E. coli appears to cause such severe reactions makes it all the more important to identify the source of the outbreak as fast as possible.

While the number of individuals confirmed to have this strain of E. coli is relatively small at just 16, it's likely that the true number is significantly higher and that those individuals may have had milder symptoms that didn't require hospitalization and therefore weren't included in the data. The confirmed cases span five states, but the distribution of the cases is interesting. Patients have been identified in Washington, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Virginia, and New York, so there's no clear connection in terms of geography.

Symptoms of E. coli infection include fever, bloating, vomiting, and even bloody diarrhea. If you're suffering from any of these symptoms, especially if they last for multiple days, it's incredibly important to contact your doctor and take any measures you need to take in order to ensure you remain healthy.

Full story: <https://bgr.com/2021/02/05/e-coli-outbreak-united-states-2021/>

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**Insulin may be stored at less than cold temps**

(UPI) Researchers report that insulin can be stored at less-cold temperatures than previously known, potentially simplifying diabetes care for people in warmer regions that have fewer resources.

Researchers from Doctors Without Borders and the University of Geneva tested insulin storage in real conditions ranging from 77 to 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit for four weeks -- the time it typically takes to use a vial. They found that the stability of insulin stored under these conditions was the same as that of cold-stored insulin, with no impact on its effectiveness.

Full story: [https://www.upi.com/Health\\_News/2021/02/05/Insulin-may-not-need-refrigeration-freeing-up-use-in-poorer-nations/5381612479786/](https://www.upi.com/Health_News/2021/02/05/Insulin-may-not-need-refrigeration-freeing-up-use-in-poorer-nations/5381612479786/)

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**Lexington overdose deaths hit new record in 2020**

(WKYT) A year dominated by darkness and isolation has pushed drug overdose deaths in Lexington to record numbers.

"A lot of people lost hope, and unfortunately, we did see a rise in deaths," said John Moses with the Lexington-Fayette County Health Department Harm Reduction Program.

Addicts stuck at home, not able to be with support groups, and idle hands leading to more than 200 overdose deaths in 2020.

Learn more: <https://www.wkyt.com/app/2021/02/06/lexington-overdose-deaths-hit-new-record-in-2020/>

**Related story - [1 in 3 Young Americans Prescribed a Psychiatric Drug Misuses Them](#)**

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**IN Governor Announces Initiative to Place Overdose Reversal Kits In All 92 Counties**

Governor Eric J. Holcomb and the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration's Division of Mental Health and Addiction on Friday announced the state will partner with Overdose Lifeline Inc. to expand access to the opioid reversal agent naloxone through the purchase of 24/7-access "[NaloxBox](#)" units.

"Making overdose response tools like naloxone readily available to any Hoosier who may encounter an individual suffering from an overdose is critical in addressing the drug epidemic," Holcomb said. "We're committed to raising awareness about the need for bystanders to carry this lifesaving drug, which is why we've made it available via so many avenues, oftentimes at no cost to Hoosiers."



Any business or community entity committed to helping Hoosiers at risk of opioid overdose is eligible to request a NaloxBox unit to install in an accessible and highly visible area. Community partners who receive a unit will be responsible for monitoring the NaloxBox location daily and requesting naloxone refills after use.

Naloxone, or Narcan, is a medication approved to reverse overdose by opioids. Naloxone is given when a person is showing signs of opioid overdose. It blocks the toxic effects of the overdose and is often the difference between a patient living and dying.

A NaloxBox is a hard acrylic box mounted to an exterior wall that provides 24/7 access to naloxone and is an effective measure of addressing the increase of opioid overdoses in Indiana. Each unit contains six to eight doses of naloxone, instructions for use and treatment referral cards.

[Overdose Lifeline Inc.](#), an Indiana nonprofit dedicated to helping individuals, families and communities affected by substance use disorder through advocacy, education, harm reduction, prevention, resources and support, intends to purchase and place 215 NaloxBox units across the state, including at least one in every county.

Learn more: <https://timesuniononline.com/Content/Top-Stories-Click-for-more-top-stories/Top-Stories/Article/Governor-Announces-Initiative-To-Place-Overdose-Reversal-Kits-In-All-92-Counties/82/353/131540>

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**Windows 10 users may be forced to change their browser next month**

[Windows 10](#) fans who are using the Legacy Edition of [Microsoft](#) Edge may have no choice but to ditch the ageing browser. Microsoft Edge was first launched back in 2015 alongside Windows 10, but the browser has undergone a major transformation since then. At the start of last year the Redmond-based tech giant released a new version of Windows 10 based on the open-sourced Chromium code, which is what is used to power Google's all conquering Chrome browser. But anyone using the Legacy version of Microsoft Edge may soon have no choice but to upgrade. Last summer Microsoft announced that the Legacy version of Microsoft Edge was reaching its end of support of March 9 2021.

Read more: <https://www.express.co.uk/life-style/science-technology/1392544/Windows-10-users-may-be-forced-to-change-their-browser-next-month>

Related - [Microsoft 365 apps say farewell to Internet Explorer 11](#)

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**Man's Missing Earbud Found in His Esophagus**

**[Note: Don't go to sleep with your ear buds in!]**

(Newser) A man is warning people against using headphones while falling asleep after health care workers had to remove a wireless earbud from his esophagus, the [AP](#) reports. Worcester resident Brad Gauthier, who detailed his bizarre experience in a Facebook post, went to bed Monday listening to music. He woke up Tuesday, shoveled snow for about an hour, and then went inside to take a sip of water. But the liquid wouldn't go down, and he had to lean over to drain it from his throat. Gauthier also noticed he was missing one of his two wireless earbuds, which he said typically uses as he falls asleep.

Gauthier's son suggested that perhaps his father had swallowed the earbud, which is exactly what an X-ray at a local emergency room revealed. The small plastic device was lodged in his lower esophagus. Doctors removed the earbud during an emergency endoscopy. Gauthier said he never experienced more than minor discomfort. Still, he cautioned others not to sleep with their headphones because "you never know where they'll end up." "It never occurred to me that (sleeping with headphones) could be a safety hazard. I was really quite lucky," Gauthier said.

Source: <https://www.newser.com/story/302221/mans-missing-earbud-found-in-his-esophagus.html>

**Free KY CATS Lecture with Credits**

The UK HealthCare/Norton Healthcare Stroke Network will host a free Comprehensive Approach To Stroke (CATS) Lecture [on Tuesday, February 16, 2021 at Noon](#) (EST) via Zoom.

[Details and Credit Information](#)

**Largest Asteroid to Fly Past Earth in 2021 'Potentially Hazardous'—Here's Why**

(Newsweek) On March 21, the largest known asteroid to fly past Earth in 2021 will make a close approach to our planet.

The enormous space rock—known as 2001 FO32—is one of numerous "near-Earth objects," or NEOs, that orbit the sun in our cosmic neighborhood.

This term refers to objects with trajectories that can take them within 30 million miles of Earth's own orbital path around the sun.

According to [NASA's](#) Center for Near Earth Object Studies (CNEOS) around 25,000 NEOs have been identified to date. The vast majority are [asteroids](#) and a handful are comets. Potentially hazardous NEOs are those with orbits that approach the Earth's own path around the sun to within 4.6 million miles, while also measuring greater than around 460 feet in diameter.

Read more: <https://www.newsweek.com/largest-asteroid-fly-earth-2021-potentially-hazardous-1567193>

The KHREF Emergency Preparedness Update is assembled several times a week. When events make it necessary, the Update may be sent out several times a day to keep our hospital and the healthcare community advised on preparedness news and information. Most of this information is compiled from open sources, and where possible reference links will be provided. There is an archive of [Emergency Preparedness Updates available here](#). If you would like to add or delete, or have something you would like to contribute to a future edition of the Emergency Preparedness Update, please contact [Preparedness@kyha.com](mailto:Preparedness@kyha.com) (include your current email address). The preparedness program for the Kentucky Hospital Association (KHA) and KHREF are supported by US DHHS ASPR HPP funds through a contract with Kentucky Public Health.