

UNMASK THE FACTS

February 28 - March 13

March 7, 2022

COVID-19 infection could be linked to changes in brain structure

A new study investigated brain changes in 785 UK Biobank participants (aged 51–81), including 401 cases who tested positive for COVID-19 between their two scans. Those who tested positive showed a greater reduction in grey matter thickness and brain size, greater changes in brain areas related to smell, and more cognitive decline between their two scans compared to those who didn't. Whether this impact can be reversed or will persist remains to be investigated with additional follow-up.

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February 28, 2022

New research works to improve children's defenses against COVID-19

A new study that is still in peer review found that the low-dose Pfizer vaccine for children 5 to 11 offered little protection against Omicron infection and decreased protection against serious illness. However, vaccination of children was still protective against severe disease and is recommended by this study. These results highlight the need to study alternative vaccine dosing for children and the continued importance of layered protections, including mask-wearing, to prevent infection and transmission.

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March 1, 2022

Most U.S. jurisdictions are easing mask restrictions

According to the measures of [community risk](#) from the CDC, only 2% of Americans now live in counties with high COVID-19 levels, which allows the other 98% to ease mask restrictions. On March 8, [Hawaii became the 50th and final state](#) to announce that it will drop its indoor mask mandate. [Puerto Rico](#) also ended many mask restrictions, as well as [US Virgin Islands](#).

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March 11, 2022

One-third of all U.S. COVID-19 deaths among children have occurred in the last 3 months

Around a third of all child deaths from COVID-19 in the U.S. have occurred during the Omicron surge. Children seem to be facing increasing risks from COVID-19 when vaccination rates among this age group stall out at alarmingly low rates. Since the beginning of the year, 550 children have died from COVID-19 in the U.S., compared to 1,017 children in the preceding 22 months.

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March 7, 2022

The U.S. launches a second round of free COVID-19 at-home tests

Households in the U.S. and its territories can now order four more at-home rapid COVID-19 antigen tests for free. The tests are available to order at [COVIDtests.gov](#) as part of the Biden administration's efforts to increase coronavirus testing. The program, run in partnership with the U.S. Postal Service, began during the Omicron surge in December and has delivered 270 million tests in 68 million packages to American households.

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