

86% of Kids Under 17 Have Antibodies From Past COVID Infection, CDC Data Shows + More

The Defender's COVID NewsWatch provides a roundup of the latest headlines related to the SARS CoV-2 virus, including its origins and COVID vaccines.

[The Defender Staff](#)



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[ABC News reported:](#)

More than eight in 10 kids under the age of 17 have antibodies from a

past [COVID-19](#) infection, according to new data from the [Centers for Disease Control](#) and Prevention.

The [analysis](#) shows that as of August, 86% of children between 6 months and 17 years old have had at least one COVID infection since the pandemic began.

That number is an increase from data in April when the public health agency found that 75% of people under the age of 17 had been infected with the virus.

“What we have to recognize is this is more of an indication that there’s been a broad spread of this virus in the pediatric community,” said Dr. John Brownstein, an ABC News contributor and chief innovation officer at Boston Children’s Hospital. “And that, you know, the kids are not sheltered from this virus. And we know that in a small number of cases, there are severe impacts.”

Biden’s Operation Warp Speed Revival Stumbles out of the Gate

[Politico reported:](#)

As [COVID’s Omicron](#) wave ebbed earlier this year, top [Biden](#) administration health officials began developing a plan to fortify the nation’s defenses against the next potentially dangerous coronavirus strain.

The initiative was envisioned as a revival of Operation Warp Speed, the Trump-era program that paired federal dollars with private sector know-how to deliver the first [vaccines](#) in record time. By replicating the formula with a range of new candidates, officials planned to churn

out increasingly advanced vaccines and treatments just as fast — and ahead of other nations.

But months later, it's barely taken off — stymied by fading political interest in prolonging a war against a pandemic that even the president has declared "over." Mired in a standoff with Republicans over more COVID response money, the administration has yet to invest heavily in any of the promising vaccine targets it's identified.

The delay has compounded concern inside the White House over Americans' vulnerability to future variants. More recently, administration officials have grown alarmed that the U.S. suddenly trails rival China in the global pursuit of new scientific breakthroughs aimed at curbing COVID.

Fall COVID Surge Begins in Europe — and U.S. Outlook Already Looks Rough

[Ars Technica reported:](#)

The dreaded winter [COVID](#) wave may already be upon us — and based on early signs, we may be in for a rough time. As people head indoors amid cooling weather, several European countries are seeing upticks in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. Though the situation in the U.S. remains quiet for now, trends in the U.S. tend to echo those in Europe.

So far, the rise in cases is driven by a familiar foe: the [Omicron](#) subvariant BA.5, which has maintained a relatively long reign as the globally dominant variant. But a thick soup of Omicron subvariants is simmering on the back burner, loaded with sublineages — notably

from BA.2. and BA.5 — converging on alarming sets of [mutations](#). Some [sublineages](#) — such as BQ.1.1, an offshoot from BA.5, and XBB, [derived from BA.2 strains](#) — are the most immune evasive subvariants seen to date.

For now, the sublineages only account for a sliver of the total cases we know about, with BA.5 still taking the lion's share. But our ability to detect and surveil new subvariants is only a fraction of what it once was.

Many experts expect the next wave to be coming in the weeks ahead — and the best way to protect from a surge in hospitalizations and death is for people to get [boosted](#). But yet another concerning reality is that booster uptake in the U.S. has been and is abysmal. While 68% of the U.S. population has received a full primary series of COVID-19 vaccines, less than half have gotten a single booster. Only 37% of people over the age of 50 have gotten a second booster. And, to date, only 7.6 million Americans have gotten their fall booster — a dose of the new, bivalent booster that, in part, targets BA.5.

Long COVID Is Still Disabling Millions of Americans

[Axios reported:](#)

Of the nearly 24 million adults in the U.S. who currently have long [COVID](#), more than 80% are having some trouble carrying out daily activities, according to [CDC data](#) released Wednesday.

Why it matters: Nearly three years into a pandemic that has left millions newly disabled, medical researchers continue to [search](#) for an

effective treatment.

The big picture: Long COVID symptoms can [include](#) shortness of breath, cognitive difficulties and symptoms that worsen even with minimal physical or mental effort — a primary indicator of chronic fatigue syndrome.

By the numbers: Between Sept. 14 and Sept. 26, more than one in four adults with long COVID reported significant limitations on day-to-day activities, per the [CDC](#) data.

U.S. COVID Recovery in 'Jeopardy' Unless Poorer Countries Helped, Group Warns

[The Guardian reported:](#)

U.S. recovery from the [COVID](#) pandemic is in “jeopardy” unless the [Biden administration](#) supports making treatment and testing for the disease more readily available to low-income countries, a powerful congressional group has warned [Joe Biden](#).

In a letter to Joe Biden led by congressman [Earl Blumenauer](#), chairman of the subcommittee on trade, the group urged the president to extend a June World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreement aimed at easing exports of generic [vaccines](#) to [treatments](#) and therapeutics.

The letter comes ahead of what is expected to be a contentious meeting of the WTO Council for trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights that starts on Thursday, where the proposals will be discussed.

The proposals are being championed by South Africa and India but face stiff opposition from the pharmaceutical industry and Switzerland and the U.K.

The Monkeypox Virus Is Mutating. Are Scientists Worried?

[Nature reported:](#)

As researchers at the Minnesota Department of Health in St. Paul were sequencing samples of the [monkeypox](#) virus a few months ago, they made a surprising discovery. In one sample collected from an infected person, a large chunk of the virus's genome was missing, and another chunk had moved to an entirely different spot in the sequence.

Crystal Gigante, a microbiologist at the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control](#) and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia, was called in to help examine the mutations. She and her colleagues found similar deletions and rearrangements in a handful of other monkeypox genomes collected in the United States, according to a report that they posted on Sept. 17 on the preprint server bioRxiv that has not undergone peer review.

Although scientists aren't alarmed, they are monitoring the situation carefully to understand why the alterations have appeared, and what they might mean for the global monkeypox outbreak. These mutations are a stark reminder that even poxviruses — which are [DNA](#) viruses that tend to evolve more slowly than RNA viruses, such as the SARS-CoV-2 [coronavirus](#) — will change over time, says Elliot Lefkowitz, a computational virologist at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

And the more the monkeypox virus is transmitted between humans, he adds, the more opportunities it will have to evolve.

Breakthrough Monkeypox Cases Seen Weeks After Second Jynneos Dose — However, Most Post-Vaccination Cases in at-Risk Group Occurred Within 14 Days of First Dose

[MedPage Today reported:](#)

Most cases of [monkeypox](#) post-vaccination occurred within 2 weeks of the first Jynneos dose, a single-center study found, but some [breakthrough](#) cases developed weeks after a second dose of the vaccine.

Of 90 individuals who tested positive for monkeypox after a single dose of Jynneos at a large monkeypox testing and vaccination site, 77% of the cases occurred within 14 days of the first dose and 14% within 14-28 days of the first dose, reported Aniruddha Hazra, MD, of Howard Brown Health in Chicago, and colleagues.

In the eight cases occurring 28 days after vaccine initiation, five positive tests came back following a second dose of the modified vaccinia Ankara-Bavarian Nordic (MVA-BN) vaccine.

NYC Expands Eligibility for Monkeypox Vaccine; to Open 30,000+ New Appointments

[NBC 4 New York reported:](#)

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene announced Wednesday it is expanding the eligibility for [monkeypox](#)

vaccination by adopting a pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) model by reaching people who may be exposed in the future — all in an attempt to protect more New Yorkers.

The city will open 30,000 new appointments at 4 p.m. Thursday, under new eligibility guidelines.

U.S. to Funnel Recent Uganda Visitors to 5 Airports for Ebola Screening

Reuters reported:

The [Biden](#) administration said Thursday it would begin redirecting U.S.-bound travelers who had been to Uganda within the previous 21 days to five major American airports to be screened for [Ebola](#).

According to Uganda's Health Ministry, at least nine people had died of the disease in Uganda by Oct. 3, since authorities in the east African nation announced the outbreak of the deadly hemorrhagic fever on Sept. 20.

The travelers need to arrive at New York–John F. Kennedy, Newark, Atlanta, Chicago O'Hare or Washington Dulles airports for screening. There is no vaccine for the Sudan strain of the disease behind the latest Uganda infections, triggering fears of a major health crisis in the country of 45 million people.

CDC, WHO, Uganda to Host Regional Meeting as Ebola Spreads

Associated Press reported:

The Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says [Uganda](#) next week will host a ministerial meeting on the outbreak of the Sudan strain of the [Ebola virus](#) which has no proven vaccine and has caused alarm in the [East Africa](#) region.

The current [Ebola](#) outbreak in central Uganda has a 69% case fatality rate, which Ogwell called “very high,” and four health workers are among the 30 people who have died. There have been 43 confirmed cases. None have been in the capital, [Kampala](#).

Ugandan scientists and their partners abroad are looking to deploy one of two possible vaccines against the Sudan strain of Ebola, the WHO representative to Uganda told reporters Thursday. But there are only 100 doses of the vaccine from the Sabin Vaccine Institute, said Yonas Tegegn Woldemariam.