

## Ask a Patient Health News June 26, 2022

### Health News: June 26, 2022

- A day after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) ordered a ban on U.S. sales of **Juul brand e-cigarettes**, a federal appeals court granted the company's emergency request to temporarily block the FDA's order until it has a chance to appeal. The FDA ban came as part of a broader review of e-cigarettes and amid concern about teenage use of the products. However, Juul argues that "several of its competitors now have a larger market share and much higher underage-use rates." In October 2021, the FDA [authorized](#) RJR Vapor Company's Vuse Solo electronic nicotine delivery system and tobacco-flavored liquid e-pods.

<https://apnews.com/article/science-politics-health-tobacco-industry-regulation-a52e9928a95908c3556a411a3738cef7>



Juul brand e-cigarette (Source: juul.com)

- The FDA expanded the use of Eli Lilly's Olumiant (baricitinib) oral tablets to include treating adults with severe alopecia areata, an autoimmune disorder that causes patchy baldness and affects more than 300,000 people in the U.S. each year. Olumiant was originally approved in 2018 for treating severe rheumatoid arthritis and has also been approved to treat Covid-19 in some hospitalized adults. It has the potential for severe side effects and contains a boxed warning about the risk of developing infections, malignancies, and cardiovascular events.

[FDA Press Release](#)

- In the U.S., the official **monkeypox** case count is misleading, scientists tell National Public Radio. The outbreak is perhaps much bigger than the 201 cases counted by the CDC, because testing is not widely available. One patient had to see four different doctors before he finally received the monkeypox test that he originally requested. By then, his symptoms had dramatically worsened.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2022/06/25/1107416457/monkeypox-outbreak-in-us>

- Some wonder what's next for the medical abortion drug **Mifeprex** now that the Supreme Court has overturned *Roe vs. Wade*. Mifeprex is taken in conjunction with misoprostol usually in the first 70 days of pregnancy and has been approved by the FDA since 2000. While it's clear that states cannot legalize drugs that the FDA did not approve, the legal question here lies in the reverse scenario: "Can a state regulate a drug more harshly than the federal government?" *Time's* Julia Zorthian examines the topic.

<https://time.com/6191270/abortion-pills-bans-fda-merrick-garland/>

Patient reviews: [mifeprex](#) and [misoprostol](#)

### Research News

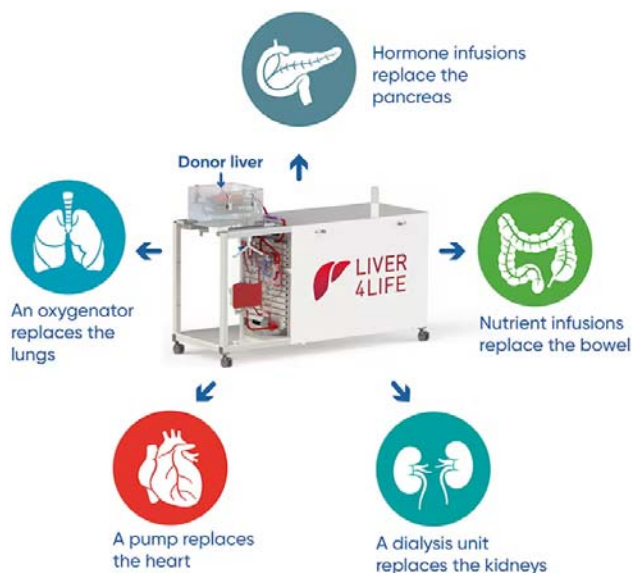
- Results from a Tulane University-led study of 843 patients with **atrial fibrillation** (AFib) suggests that "the simple approach is usually best" when it comes to **ablation**, a procedure where physicians destroy or ablate cardiac tissue to correct irregular heart rhythms. Researchers found that using advanced image-guided technology to more aggressively target diseased areas of the heart that cause arrhythmias didn't lead to better outcomes for patients -- and put some at higher risk of strokes. The study was published in *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

<https://news.tulane.edu/pr/global-afib-study-finds-simple-procedures-work-best>

- ETH Zurich's small study on humans and mice found that breast cancer metastases form more efficiently during periods of **sleep**. They found that the sleep hormone melatonin seems to provide some "fuel" to the cancer cell growth. Researchers suggest that results could significantly change the way cancer is diagnosed and treated in future. The study was published in *Nature*.

<https://ethz.ch/en/news-and-events/eth-news/news/2022/06/pr-breastcancer-is-nocturnal.html>

- While transplant surgery techniques have changed and improved over the years, the method of preserving transplantable organs often still involves placing them on ice until they can be used. A **liver** can only be sustained on ice for around 12 hours once outside of the body. A unique "**perfusion**" **machine** developed by a team of researchers from University Hospital Zurich, ETH Zurich, Wyss Zurich, and the University of Zurich made it possible to not only **extend the amount of time a liver can be preserved from hours to days**, but also has made it possible to **heal infections in livers** so that they are acceptable for transplantation.



"Liver 4 Live" efusion machine Image Source: [Medgadget.com](https://www.medgadget.com)

In May 2021, a liver cancer patient received a liver that had been damaged but was treated using the Zurich team's "Liver 4 Life" machine prior to transplantation with a cocktail of antibiotics and other drugs. The time lag between organ harvesting and transplant took **three days**, and the patient is alive and well a year later. A paper describing the achievement was published in *Nature Biotechnology*.

<https://gizmodo.com/liver-transplant-perfusion-machine-1848997024>



Above: the surgeon, Professor Pierre-Alain Clavien (left), and the patient after the latter was discharged from the hospital after the successful transplantation. Image Source: [Newsweek](https://www.newsweek.com)

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- A new study has found that age doesn't slow down the liver's regeneration; whether you're 20 or 80, your **liver** is on average just **three years old**. The liver has the hazardous job of detoxifying the body, and because of its regular exposure to toxins, it risks more injury than most organs. To cope, it has a remarkable regenerative capacity, unique among organs.

<https://newatlas.com/biology/liver-cells-aging-regeneration/>

- Meta Platforms (formerly Facebook) was sued over claims that **private medical data is being shared secretly with Facebook** when patients access web portals for some health-care providers. Facebook's Pixel (now called Meta Pixel) tracking tool redirects patient communications and other supposedly "secure" information without authorization and in violation of federal and state laws, according to the lawsuit filed in San Francisco federal court as a proposed class action on behalf of millions of patients. An investigation by *The Markup* found at least 33 top U.S. hospitals send sensitive data to Facebook via a tracking pixel.

<https://themarkup.org/pixel-hunt/2022/06/16/facebook-is-receiving-sensitive-medical-information-from-hospital-websites>

- The first sign that something was wrong with the fashion executive was when her leg buckled out from under her as she was leaving a business dinner. She would spend the next eight weeks bouncing between doctors' offices and emergency rooms in Los Angeles and Manhattan trying to get a diagnosis for what she described as "ridiculous" pain in her leg. Finally, hours before her discharge from a New York hospital after a nine-day stay, the patient learned she had a serious illness that had developed seemingly without warning. Read Sandra Boodman's latest **medical mystery**.

<https://patabook.com/news/2022/06/19/she-was-ambushed-by-searing-leg-pain-that-struck-without-warning/>

- The worst is yet to come for the world's poorest people, based on projections from United Nations' World Bank. By the end of this year, at least **75 million more people will be pushed into extreme poverty** (living on less than U.S. \$1.90 a day) **than was expected before the pandemic**. By the end of 2022, 677 million people could be living in extreme poverty and about half of those could be living in sub-Saharan Africa. Check out *Nature's* "six stark graphics."

<https://www.nature.com/immersive/d41586-022-01647-6/index.html>

-The CDC and U.S. Food and Drug Administration expanded emergency use authorization of the **Moderna** COVID-19 Vaccine for use in **children** age six months and up. Previously, it had only been authorized for adults 18 and up. The CDC also authorized the **Pfizer** vaccine for use in children 6 months through 4 years of age. Previously, the Pfizer vaccine had been authorized for ages 5 and up. *Nature* compares the two vaccines in terms of children's clinical trials data, effects, efficacy, and more.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-01689-w>

- Pfizer announced that it would discontinue recruiting healthy volunteers to use in a study of its Paxlovid Covid-19 drug in patients who aren't at high risk of severe disease after **the pill didn't help alleviate their Covid symptoms**, a major setback for broader use of the treatment. A recent study on "Paxlovid rebound," which has not yet been peer-reviewed, found levels of live virus in various rebounding patients for up to 11 days after completing Paxlovid, the *Boston Globe* reports.

<https://time.com/6187765/covid-19-paxlovid-healthy-patients/>

Have you used **Paxlovid**? [Read](#) and/or add a review at Ask a Patient.

### **Risk of Catching Covid on a Plane**

Unlike U.S. rail company [Amtrak](#), airlines in the U.S. do not require **pre-trip Covid-19 health checks**, so there is little to discourage a sick passenger from getting on board a flight. While airplanes have good ventilation systems, the risk of catching Covid on a plane depends on several factors:

- **How crowded it is** - more people means higher carbon dioxide levels which means higher transmission possibility.
- **Whether the plane is cruising or standing** at the gate or tarmac, since the aircraft is only pumping air through its ventilation filters while the plane is flying. Gate time is also when people are boarding or disembarking and in close proximity to each other.
- But the **biggest risk factor of all**, according to Richard Corsi, who studies indoor air pollution at Portland State

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<https://www.askapatient.com/news/newsletter-archive/>

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University, is **who you are assigned to sit next to**. "The greatest risk in flight would be if you happen to draw the **short straw** and sit next to or in front, behind or across the aisle from an infector." If you are sitting next to someone who is actively sick with Covid, on a two hour flight you have a 60% chance of catching Covid from that person if you are both unmasked, with reduced chance of infection if one or both of you are masked.

<https://khn.org/news/what-is-the-risk-of-getting-coronavirus-on-a-plane/>

<https://slate.com/technology/2022/04/covid-airplane-transmission-rip-mask-mandate.html>



- *USA Today's* Trevor Hughes decided to test airplane air quality on a recent round trip flight from Denver to visit his elderly parents in Vermont. He bought an accurate but relatively inexpensive **CO2 detector** for \$140 that he kept in his lap throughout both legs of the flight. Although the levels of CO2 on his plane never reached anything near what's considered even mildly unhealthy, the numbers suggested he was being exposed to coronavirus. Measurements showed CO2 levels skyrocketed during boarding of the Airbus A319 headed to Vermont, but remained virtually unchanged on his flight back to Denver. Check out: "COVID on planes: What I learned by measuring CO2 levels on my flight."

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/took-co2-detector-flight-showed-110027996.html>



CO2 detector (Source: USA Today)

#### Answer our quick poll:

With Covid cases rising again in some areas, **how worried** are you that you will catch Covid-19 now?

Not worried

Slightly worried

Somewhat Worried

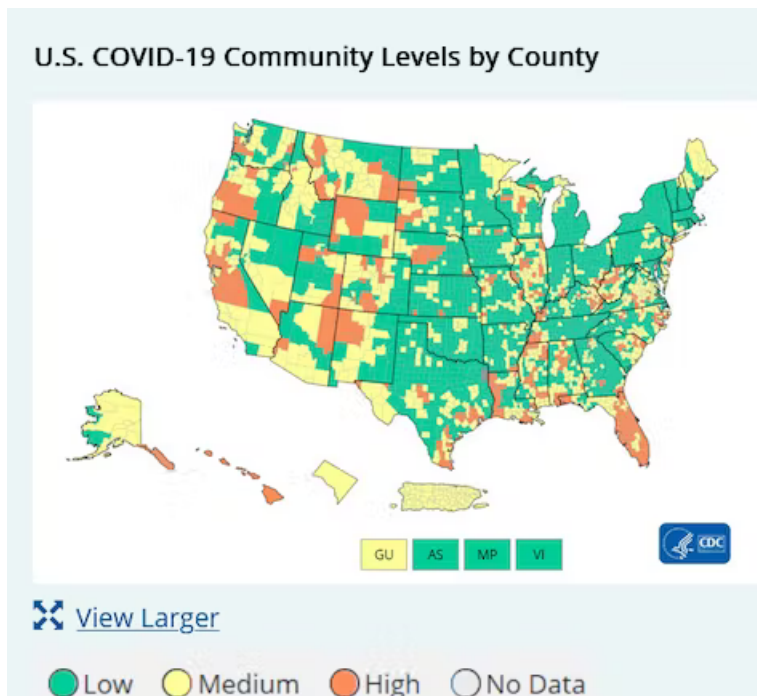
Very worried

[Vote Here](#)

## Covid Statistics

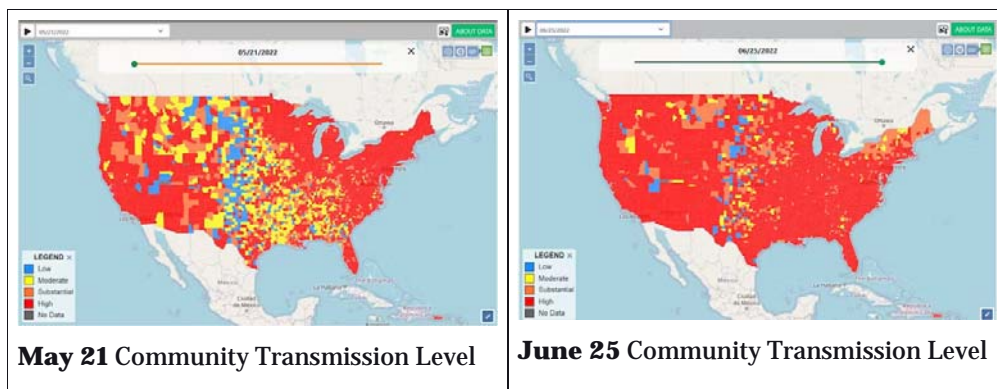
The CDC reports that as of June 22, 2022, the current 7-day moving average of daily new cases (97,430) decreased 5.6% compared with the previous 7-day moving average (103,175). As of June 23, 2022, about 88% of the U.S. population lived in communities with low or medium Covid-19 levels.

The areas in yellow in the map below are considered "medium" Covid-19 areas while orange depicts an area of "high" Covid-19.



- Although the CDC reported another **decrease** in cases across the U.S. this week, anecdotally, more and **more vaccinated people are testing positive** for Covid-19 using **at-home tests**. These tests results are not usually reported to local health authorities. The two CDC maps shown below offer a different view of the pandemic situation than the heavily green-colored map above, which is meant for the general public and uses a calculation that is heavily based on hospitalizations, not cases.

The [Community Transmission levels data](#) reflected in the maps below "are provided for healthcare facility use only," according to the CDC, but they show a **dramatic increase in transmission level** across the country in just one month, with more than 94% of the country experiencing "substantial" or "high" levels of transmission by June 25.



Globally, the number of new weekly cases has continued to decline since the peak in January 2022. The World Health Organization reported that during the week of ending June 19, 2022, over 3.3 million cases worldwide were reported, a 4% decrease as compared to the previous week. However, the rise in prevalence of Omicron BA.4 and BA.5, which contain genetic mutations associated with higher transmissibility, has coincided with a rise in cases in several WHO regions.

<https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/weekly-epidemiological-update-on-covid-19---22-june-2022>

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