

Community Bulletin



Lebanon
1 to 31 August 2022

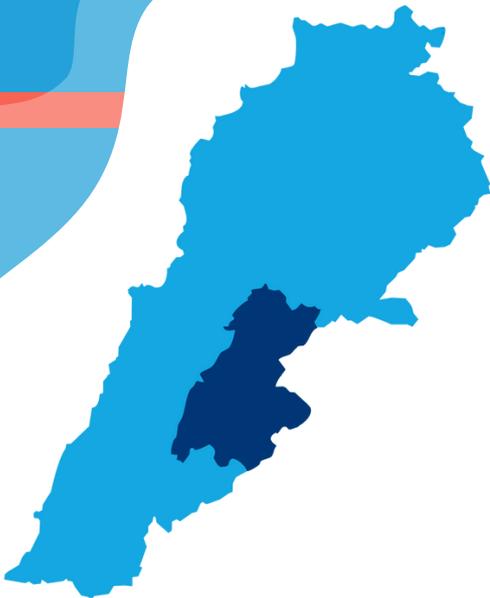
98
Deaths



31,450
Cases until July



5,752,986
Doses Administered



Introduction to Rooted in Trust

Rooted in Trust (RiT) is a USAID Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs (BHA)-funded project run by Internews to support humanitarian and public health agencies combat and manage the spread of rumors and misinformation about COVID-19. (1) The project was recently re-launched in September 2021 with its second chapter (RiT2.0) expected to run until end of 2022.

In this bulletin, Internews profiles commonly occurring rumors across social media sites and offline through our partners' activities in Lebanon between 1 and 31 August 2022. Our partners "Endless Medical Advantage" are active in engaging both the Syrian & Lebanese communities in the Bekaa region, and "Maharat" engage with different communities of all nationalities living in all regions of Lebanon.

During this period, **102 rumors were collected from Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram**, in addition to private groups and accounts that have a relatively high user engagement. An additional **130 rumors were collected offline** through aimed activities conducted by our partners, with the goal of reaching populations and groups that are less active online and who are exposed to rumors through word of mouth.

2 rumors were subsequently selected for this bulletin which fall under the recurring themes of "COVID-19", "Long COVID" and "Hoax."

COVID-19 situation overview in the country

Lebanon has seen **31,450 new cases** over the period spanning the 1st till the 31st of August, (2) with 98 new deaths, (3) and with the virus spreading more prominently among young adults aged 20 to 29. (4) Lebanon is still situated in Level 3 of community transmission, (5) with the average positivity rate of 11%, but it's important to note that **the number of tests has declined in recent weeks due to many factors including people not being willing to test due to mild symptoms, and under-reported lab results by the private sector.** (6) The overall COVID-19 vaccine coverage in the country is **43.9%** of people who received two doses. (7)

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Vaccine roll-out:

People of all nationalities living in Lebanon can get vaccinated, including Syrians, Palestinians, and migrant workers, even if their residency documents are not up to date, and no prior registration is needed to receive the vaccine: (9)

List of vaccination centers: <https://cdn.me-qr.com/pdf/7695678.pdf>

1st Dose	Everyone over the age of five years
2nd Dose	Available to all those who have received the vaccine 3 weeks or more prior
3rd Dose	Available to all those who have received the second dose five months ago or more
4th Dose	Available to all, six months after receiving the third dose

Rumor #1

Long COVID

Fact Checking

- ✓ Most people who get COVID-19 recover within a few weeks, but some people—even those who had mild versions of the disease— might have symptoms that last a long time afterward. (9)
- ✓ According to the WHO, between 10 and 20 percent of people who fully recover from a COVID-19 infection experience several mid- and long-term effects, now known as “Long COVID.” (10)

What is long COVID?

- ✓ Post COVID-19 conditions usually happen 3 months after the start of COVID-19 with symptoms that last for at least 2 months and cannot be explained by another diagnosis. (11)
- ✓ The effects of Long COVID can range from fatigue, breathlessness, chest pains and persistent coughs, to brain fog (e.g., the inability to concentrate for extended periods of time; forgetfulness; confusion) . (12)

Who is more at risk? (13)

- ✓ Post-COVID conditions are found more often in people who had severe COVID-19 illness, but anyone who has been infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 can experience post-COVID conditions, even people who had mild illness or no symptoms from COVID-19.
- ✓ People who are not vaccinated against COVID-19 and become infected might also be at higher risk of developing post-COVID conditions compared to people who were vaccinated and had breakthrough infections.
- ✓ Other risk factors include underlying health conditions prior to COVID-19.

Why are fully vaccinated people still getting a COVID-19 infection? (14)

- ✓ Some fully vaccinated people will still get COVID-19 if they are exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19. These are called ‘breakthrough infections’.
- ✓ In general, vaccinations of any kind (from COVID-19 to chicken pox) are intended to lessen the likelihood that an individual contracts a certain illness. But the most important goal of a vaccine, and what is essential to know about the COVID-19 vaccine, is that it reduces the severity of the illness within an individual if they do get sick.



“#Lebanese study explains the trends of different symptoms and risk factors after recovery from #Covid-19 and attempt to link the symptoms and their severity with long-term risk factors. For the initial results, symptoms were mild among the vaccinated, as for those who did not receive the vaccine, they varied from one person to another. Among them are symptoms related to the eye, such as watery eyes and the feeling of a foreign body inside the eye, and symptoms related to this cardiovascular system. This was before 2022, as for now, the number of infections is increasing among the vaccinated, especially with the recent variants.”

-- Shared on Twitter, by an account with 4,900 followers. Got a relatively high engagement of 140 reactions and 8 comments.

- ✓ In the case of the Omicron variant, for example, initial reports show that while receiving only one or two doses of an mRNA vaccine, like the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines, does not reduce the likelihood of infection against as much as it does against previous variants, it is still protective.
- ✓ However, receiving a booster greatly helps both prevent the likelihood of infection with the omicron variant and reduces the severity of illness if you do get sick.
- ✓ So simply put, even though the vaccines won't always keep you from catching the virus, they'll make it much more likely you end up with mild symptoms like congestion, a sore throat, and fatigue, rather than a hospital stay.



Rumor #1

Long COVID

Recommendations

For the Community

- Even if you are fully vaccinated, you should still practice safety precautions such as mask-wearing because you are not 100% protected against COVID-19, especially during times when there is a new wave, likely caused by a new variant, and the number of cases are increasing.
- To book an appointment, you can view the list of vaccination centers near you, their schedules, and their contact information on the following link: <https://cdn.me-qr.com/pdf/7695678.pdf>
- If you experience side-effects that you are concerned about after recovering from COVID-19, you can contact the MoPH vaccine hotline free-of-charge on **1214** to report your symptoms and get further directions.
- Seek care from your physician: For people who suspect long COVID, mild symptoms will gradually get better on their own, but if they persist or are severe and disrupt daily activities, it is important to contact your doctor. You can also find a list of centers that provide subsidized healthcare all over Lebanon here: <https://www.moph.gov.lb/userfiles/files/HealthCareSystem/PHC/phcc.pdf>
- Refugees can check this list of hospitals they can access and contact the UNHCR NExtCare Hotline **01 504 020** at any time to check if they are supported by UNHCR and other humanitarian partners.

What to expect from a visit to the Dr's?

- Your Dr will ask you about your symptoms, so it might help if you go prepared to answer questions about when your symptoms started, what makes them worse, how often you experience them, and how they affect your activities.
- Your health care provider might do lab tests, such as a complete blood count or liver function test. You might have other tests or procedures, such as chest X-rays, based on your symptoms. The information you provide and any test results will help your health care provider come up with a treatment plan.



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Practical Resources

- [WHO dashboard](https://covid19.who.int) (https://covid19.who.int)
- [WHO COVID-19 page](https://covid19.who.int) (https://covid19.who.int)
- [Protect yourself \(English/Arabic\)](https://covid19.who.int) (https://covid19.who.int)
- [Q&A \(English/Arabic\)](https://covid19.who.int) (https://covid19.who.int)
- [WHO Lebanon website](https://www.who.int/ar) (https://www.who.int/ar)
- [MoPH Lebanon COVID-19 information page](https://www.moph.gov.lb) (moph.gov.lb)
- [WHO Refugee and Migrant Health Fact sheet](https://covid19.who.int) (https://covid19.who.int)
- [WHO Refugee and Migrant Health Q&A](https://covid19.who.int) (https://covid19.who.int)
- [MoPH Lebanon COVID-19 vaccination page](https://www.moph.gov.lb/en) (www.moph.gov.lb/en)
- [WHO Lebanon website](https://www.who.int/ar) (www.who.int/ar)



Rumor #2

Hoax

Fact Checking

- ✓ A 36-year-old man in Italy appears to be the world's first documented case of being diagnosed with COVID-19, monkeypox, and HIV, which is not the same thing as AIDS, at the same time this summer, according to a recent case report published in the Journal of Infection. (15)
- ✓ Evidently, the man had caught all infections at approximately the same time, so his HIV infection was quite new and had not developed into AIDS, (16) which means that he was not immunocompromised, as the rumor suggests.
- ✓ Regarding vaccination, he reported receiving two doses of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer) in December 2021, so he was somewhat protected against severe COVID-19 illness. (17)
- ✓ For this man, his COVID-19 and monkeypox infections have cleared up without any issues, and he has been placed on HIV treatment.

Facts about Monkeypox and COVID-19:

- ✓ Since January 2022, over **16,000 cases of monkeypox infection have been detected in over 74 countries.** (18) Considering these sudden outbreaks, the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared monkeypox a public health emergency.
- ✓ In Lebanon, all confirmed monkeypox cases have out-of-country travel history. (19) **A cumulative total of 7 cases of monkeypox** (5 males and 2 females) have been confirmed in the country with no associated death to date. (20)
- ✓ The COVID-19 pandemic is still ongoing with considerable morbidities and mortalities worldwide. (21)
- ✓ In Lebanon alone, the cumulative number of COVID-19 cases recorded since the start of the **pandemic in Lebanon is 1,208,381 patients, with 10,622 COVID-19 deaths.** (22)
- ✓ Worldwide as of September 7, COVID-19 has claimed 6,484,136 lives, with a cumulative **603,711,760 confirmed cases** since the beginning of the pandemic. (23)
- ✓ Monkeypox and SARS-CoV-2 infections share various similar symptoms, including fever, headache, fatigue, and swelling of lymph nodes. (24) The coexistence of these viruses in nature increases the risk of coinfection, which can subsequently put more burden on the global healthcare system.



"They spread this news to frighten people, but it is actually reassuring: A person has been diagnosed with #AIDS, #Covid and #monkeypox simultaneously. A person with AIDS, which disrupts immunity, and yet neither Covid nor monkeypox killed him, nor both. This indicates that they are not deadly viruses or global epidemics."

---Shared on Twitter, by an account that belongs to a Healthcare Professional with 48,700 followers. Got a relatively high engagement of 35 shares and 129 likes.



7

cases of monkeypox have been confirmed in the country with no associated death to date.



Important Numbers and Helplines

- MOPH Hotlines: Corona **1787** | Vaccine **1214** (both free)
- COVID-19 call center **01-594459**
- Airport Quarantine Section **01-629352**
- Preventive Medicine Center **01-843769** | **01-830300**
- Epidemiological Surveillance Unit
01-614194 | **01-614196**
- WHO Lebanon **01-612970/1/2**
- Hospital Admission Hotline **01 - 832700**
- LRC Emergency Hotline **140**
- LRC Medical Consultations and Oxygen Machine Request for COVID-19 Patients Hotline **1760**
- Endless Medical Advantage - Bekaa number for information and referral services **76-864 721**



Rumor #2

Hoax

Fact Checking

Facts about HIV and AIDS:

- ✓ HIV is the virus that can pass from person to person, and it is the virus that can cause AIDS, but HIV and AIDS are not the same thing. People with HIV do not always have AIDS. (25)
- ✓ Over time, HIV destroys an important kind of the cell in your immune system (called CD4 cells or T cells) that helps protect you from infections. (26) When you don't have enough of these CD4 cells, your body can't fight off infections the way it normally can.
- ✓ Without treatment, it usually takes about 10 years for someone with HIV to develop AIDS. (27) Treatment slows down the damage the virus causes and can help people stay healthy for several decades. AIDS is defined as when somebody gets dangerous infections or has a very low number of CD4 cells.
- ✓ HIV and AIDS are not the same thing: HIV is a virus that weakens your immune system, but many treatment options are available. (28) On treatment, a person with HIV can live a normal life without transmitting it to others.
- ✓ AIDS, on the other hand, is a deadly condition you could develop from leaving HIV untreated. (29) Often, those that do develop AIDS are people who have not been tested for HIV and have never taken treatment.
- ✓ Once considered an automatic death sentence, today HIV is considered more of a chronic disease – given access and adherence to treatment, people living with HIV should remain alive and healthy. (30)
- ✓ Significant advances have been made in HIV treatment over the last 30 years; the efficacy of antiretroviral drugs (ARVs), scaling up their access, and bringing treatment closer to people (31) have all contributed to making a normal life possible for people with HIV.
- ✓ If you do have HIV, treatment can lower or even stop the chances of spreading the virus to other people during sex. If you don't have HIV, there's also a daily medicine called PrEP that can protect you from HIV.
- ✓ Despite the advances that have been made however, people continue to die from HIV-related causes and there remain many gaps and challenges in providing people with treatment, especially marginalized communities. (32) Stigma, discrimination, social exclusion, violence and criminalization are part of their daily struggles, and in some cases prevents them from getting the treatment they deserve.



“They spread this news to frighten people, but it is actually reassuring: A person has been diagnosed with #AIDS, #Covid and #monkeypox simultaneously. A person with AIDS, which disrupts immunity, and yet neither Covid nor monkeypox killed him, nor both. This indicates that they are not deadly viruses or global epidemics.”

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Recommendations For the Community

- Although Monkeypox is not an aerosol and is less infectious than COVID-19, it can still spread by respiratory droplets (such as from coughing or sneezing), which require closer contact. Therefore masking, good airflow, sanitation, and physical distancing — measures that will also protect people against COVID-19 — will protect you from monkeypox infection and prevent monkeypox transmission in your community.
- Monkeypox can also spread via fomites or surfaces and materials, in particular bedsheets. To protect yourself and prevent Monkeypox infection and spread, if you encounter surfaces or materials that have been used by a person with suspected or diagnosed Monkeypox it is recommended to disinfect contaminated surfaces.
- Monkeypox virus and COVID-19 infections can occur simultaneously. Flu-like symptoms and COVID-19 positivity should not exclude monkeypox, especially in high-risk individuals. (33)
- If you suspect that you or anyone you know might have monkeypox or HIV, contact the MoPH Epidemiological Surveillance Unit's number to report it and get further assistance and directions: **01-614194 | 01-614196**.
- If you or anyone you know has HIV or AIDS, and require urgent support, assistance, and/or counseling you may day dial any of the centers below: (34)

Centers	Numbers
Anwar Al Mahabba Association	01-391396
Armenian Relief Cross (ARC)	01-253793
HELEM	01-748258
SKOUN	01-202714
Soins Infirmiers et Développement Communautaire (SIDC)	01-482428
Vivre positif	01-480714 71/062321
L'Escale Drop-in Centre(DIC)	01-491705
Marsa	01-737647
Proud Lebanon	76/608204
Oui pour la vie	78/881331

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