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Inside C2

Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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Russia halts gas supplies to Poland and Bulgaria

WARSAW/SOFIA/KYIV, April 27 (Reuters) - Russia halted gas supplies to Bulgaria and Poland on Wednesday for rejecting its demand for payment in roubles, taking direct aim at European economies in a move that also exposed confusion in the EU on how to respond to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

The decision, denounced by European leaders as "blackmail", comes as Russia's own economy wilts under sweeping international sanctions and as Western countries ramp up arms shipments to help Ukraine fend off a new Russian assault in the east.

Ukraine reported on Wednesday that Russian troops had made gains in several villages there. Russia reported a number of blasts on its side of the border, and a blaze at an arms depot. Kyiv called the explosions "karma".

Ukraine's prosecutor-general said Russian forces had used tear gas and stun grenades to disperse a pro-Ukraine rally in the southern city of Kherson, the first big urban centre seized by Moscow after the Feb. 24 invasion. [read more](#)

Gazprom (GAZPM), Russia's gas export monopoly, said it had "completely suspended gas supplies" to the Polish and Bulgarian gas companies "due to absence of payments in roubles", as stipulated in a decree from President Vladimir Putin that aims to soften the impact of sanctions on the Russian economy.

Polish President Andrzej Duda said the move violated "basic legal principles". Bulgarian Energy Minister Alexander Nikolov said gas was being used as a "political and economic weapon".

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Russia remained a reliable energy supplier and denied it was engaging in blackmail. He declined to say how many countries had agreed to switch to paying for gas in roubles but other European customers said gas supplies were flowing normally.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen called the cut-off "yet another attempt by Russia to use gas as an instrument of blackmail".

But the Commission has also said the EU's gas buyers can engage with Russia's payment scheme provided certain conditions are met.

Germany's main importer, Uniper (UN01.DE), said it could pay without violations. Austria and Hungary, among others, have also indicated they will take this route.

However, ambassadors from the EU member



states asked the Commission for clearer guidance on whether sending euros to Gazprombank would amount to a breach of sanctions.

Poland and Bulgaria are both former Soviet-era satellites of Moscow that have since joined the EU and NATO. Poland has been one of the Kremlin's most vocal opponents over the war.

Bulgaria has long had warmer relations with Russia, but Prime Minister Kirill Petkov, an anti-graft campaigner who took office last year, has denounced the invasion of Ukraine. He was due in Kyiv on Wednesday to meet President Volodymyr Zelenskiy.

Bulgaria and Poland are the only two European countries with Gazprom contracts due to expire at the end of this year, which meant their search for alternative supplies was well under way.

The cut-off comes as the weather turns warmer and the need for gas heating dwindles, and so is unlikely to lead to immediate supply cuts to consumers. Poland says it has ample gas in storage, and Bulgaria, a comparatively small consumer, is seeking alternative supplies from Greece and Turkey.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine
A pressure gauge is pictured at a Gaz-System gas compressor station in

Rembelszczyna outside Warsaw
Valves and pipelines are pictured at the Gaz-System gas distribution station in Gustorzyn, central Poland

But if the cut-off lasts for many months or spreads to other countries, it could cause havoc for a continent that relies on plentiful and cheap Russian gas to heat homes, power factories and generate electricity.

Kyiv has been urging EU countries to stop funding Moscow's war effort by halting imports that bring Russia hundreds of millions of dollars a day. Germany, the biggest buyer of Russian energy, hopes to stop importing Russian oil within days, but weaning itself off Russian gas is a far bigger challenge.

Economy Minister Robert Habeck said a Russian energy embargo or blockade would tip Germany, Europe's largest economy, into recession. [read more](#)

At the same time, a Russian economy ministry document indicated that Russia's economy could shrink by as much as 12.4% this year, as sanctions bite. [read more](#)

Since the Russian invasion force was driven back at the outskirts of Kyiv last month, Moscow has refocused its operation on eastern Ukraine, starting a new offensive from several directions to fully capture two provinces known as the

Donbas.

"Russia has already gathered strength for a large-scale offensive in eastern Ukraine... in the coming days we will need all our resilience and extraordinary unity," Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksiy Reznikov said on his Facebook page.

Blasts were heard early on Wednesday in three Russian provinces bordering Ukraine, authorities said, and an ammunition depot in the Belgorod province caught fire. [read more](#)

Kyiv has not confirmed responsibility for these and other earlier incidents, but has described them as payback. "Karma is a cruel thing," presidential advisor Mikheylo Podolyak wrote on social media.

An aide to the mayor of the ruined port city of Mariupol said Russian forces had renewed their attacks on the Azovstal steel plant, where fighters and some civilians remain holed up.

No agreement was reached on evacuating civilians from Mariupol on Wednesday.



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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

04/27/2022



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We Are Hosting The “Texas Economic Roundtable”



The Texas Economic Roundtable jointly organized by the International Trade Center and many local chambers of commerce will hold the first in a series of activities with a luncheon tomorrow at the Houston International Studio. The Texas Economic Roundtable plans to bring a new and energizing vitality into the community to promote the economy of Texas.

Former Harris County Judge Robert Eckels will be our

keynote speaker and former Missouri City councilman Danny Nguyen will host the meeting. We have invited many local politicians and community leaders to join at this roundtable.

Judge Eckels is recognized as a national leader in issues of transportation, public finance, crisis management, disaster preparation, homeland security, education and healthcare. He served six terms in the Texas House of Representatives before being

elected county judge of Harris County.

We have known Judge Eckels for more than thirty years. As an old friend, he has come back to our community and will try to help all of us understand the current situation in Texas as well as in the nation.

We are so very proud to sponsor this economic roundtable to promote Texas.

Today tens of thousands of people are moving to Texas every month. Tesla has just announced the recent construction of the world's largest indoor auto assembly plant in Austin, Texas. Google and Samsung also are constantly expanding their base in Texas while the natural gas and oil business are also booming.

We are here to provide all the information to those people who want to come to Texas.



Southern DAILY Make Today Different

Editor's Choice



A medical specialist wearing protective gear sits in an ambulance parked at the Pokrovskaya hospital in Saint Petersburg, Russia. REUTERS/Anton Vaganov



People pose for a picture in front of the debris of Russian military machinery destroyed during Russia's invasion of Ukraine, in the village of Rusaniv, Kyiv region, Ukraine. REUTERS/Vladyslav Musiienko



Oscar-winning British actor Tilda Swinton performs in "Embodying Pasolini" at the Mattatoio in Rome, Italy. REUTERS/Yara Nardi



A woman reacts as she says goodbye to her serviceman husband before he leaves to the front-line, amid Russia's invasion, in Uzhhorod, Ukraine. REUTERS/Serhii Hudak



Actress Amber Heard listens during ex-husband Johnny Depp's defamation trial against her, at the Fairfax County Circuit Courthouse in Fairfax, Virginia. Brendan Smialowski/Pool via REUTERS



Children depict a Soviet monument to a friendship between Ukrainian and Russian nations after its demolition, amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine, in central Kyiv, Ukraine. REUTERS/Gleb Garanich

How To Handle Quarantining, Testing, And Masking After Covid-19 Exposure

Omicron Is Exploding. What To Do If You're Exposed

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



People line up for a Covid-19 test in Los Angeles on January 5, 2022, as the omicron variant continues to spread at a blistering pace. (Frederic J. Brown/AFP/Getty Images)

If you find out you've been exposed to someone who's tested positive for Covid-19, a rush of questions might come to mind: Do I have to quarantine? What if I can't find a good mask or a test? Even if I test negative, can I be certain that I'm not contagious? With omicron causing record-shattering case growth over the past few weeks, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) guidelines about what to do after exposure have shifted, and they remain frustratingly unclear. The last thing anyone wants to do when they've just learned they've been exposed is to dig through a bunch of confusing guidelines.

Yet we all need to know what to do in this situation. Even if you're not worried about omicron's effects on you personally — maybe because it appears to be milder, because you're in a low-risk group, or because you think Covid-19 is inescapable at this point — it's crucial to do all you reasonably can to avoid spreading it to others right now, especially anyone who might be elderly, immunocompromised, or unvaccinated. Testing capacity is currently very strained and some hospitals are already running out of staffing and beds. It's really important that we not contribute to that crunch. Experts aren't suggesting Americans have to go back to a March 2020-style lockdown. Unlike at the start of the pandemic, we have vaccines and boosters that are highly effective at preventing serious illness and death. But they are advising people to be thoughtful about risk right now — both in terms of the precautions we take to avoid being exposed to omicron, and in terms of what we do if we have been exposed.

There's a spectrum of views here from three epidemiologists; within this spectrum, you can decide where you fall depending on your own risk calculus, the people you come in contact with, and the community spread in your area.



1) I just found out I've been exposed to someone who tested positive — what's the first thing I should do?

There's broad unanimity on this front. "Don't run to get tested. And don't panic," said David Dowdy, an epidemiologist at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. If you spent time indoors with someone and then find out they've tested positive, it's possible you might get Covid-19 from the exposure, but you won't test positive immediately after it. So if it's only been a day or two since your exposure, the thing to focus on first is not testing, but the possibility of needing to quarantine — and the certainty of needing a good mask. If you're unvaccinated, or are vaccinated with two doses but not yet boosted, you should quarantine for five days and continue to wear a mask around others for five more days after that. If you're boosted, then you don't need to quarantine, according to the CDC guidelines. But you should still wear a mask around others for 10 days after the exposure.



And yes, "wear a mask around others" includes others in your home — like children or roommates — if possible. Dowdy acknowledged that's hard to do, but said his family did it when one of them recently had Covid-19: They opened the windows in the house, wore N95s, and slept in different

rooms. "Not everyone will be able to do this," he said, "but for those who can, it's the ideal way to halt transmission."

2) The CDC says I don't need to quarantine if I'm vaccinated and boosted. Is that really sound guidance?

When I asked the epidemiologists whether they agreed with the CDC on this point, they expressed a range of opinion. "I think this is a safe bet. Boosters prevent infection from omicron very well," Katelyn Jetelina, an infectious diseases epidemiologist with the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, told me by email. In other words, if you're boosted, the chance that you'll spread the omicron variant is significantly lowered because there's a lower chance of you becoming infected with it in the first place.



Dowdy, for his part, said of the CDC guidance, "I think this is reasonable, depending on the level of transmission in your area. If you're in the midst of a hot spot, it probably makes sense to quarantine even if you are vaccinated. But if transmission levels are low, this is reasonable advice."

He added that it's important to consider a couple of other factors in making your personal decision: first, whether you frequently come into contact with other people who could get really sick if they got infected, and second, if it's been more than a few months since your last vaccine dose. "In either of these cases, it makes sense to quarantine, even if you are vaccinated," he said.

Tara Smith, an epidemiologist at Kent State University, told me she doesn't think we have enough data about omicron to know if the CDC's advice is solid. "If you can quarantine, I would still recommend it," she said.



3) When should I take a test? What should I do if I have difficulty getting a test?

The best time to get tested seems to be about five days after exposure (or at any time after a fever develops). Just remember that tests

— especially rapid antigen tests — are not foolproof. "Testing negative doesn't mean you can go mask-free. You should still mask around others in public" until it's been 10 days since the exposure, Smith said. "Even with a negative test, if you have exposure and symptoms, it's best to assume you are Covid-positive and act as such."

What about if you can't get access to a test? "In that case, Dowdy said, "The best thing to do is continue quarantine for 10 days after any exposure. If you haven't developed symptoms within 10 days, it's reasonable to end quarantine at that time."

With all of this, he said, there is a balance of risks and benefits — as well as personal circumstances — that must be assessed on an individual level. "What I'm describing is the ideal situation — for example, someone who can easily quarantine and continue working at home," he said. "But most of us don't live in those ideal situations, and it's important for all of us to be understanding of others who may not have the same support systems that we have."



Jetelina agrees that if you have difficulty getting a test, you should assume that you are positive and isolate until you can get your hands on one. "If you're still asymptomatic after five days (and still can't get a test), you can stop isolation as long as you can wear a good mask for five more days," she wrote, noting N95s are the best option.

4) The CDC says I'm supposed to mask up for 10 days after exposure. Is that really necessary?

Both Jetelina and Smith were crystal-clear on this one: Yes!

"This is incredibly important as you can still be infectious after five days," Jetelina said. We're still learning about the transmission dynamics of omicron, and although many people will probably stop being infectious before 10 days have passed, "wearing a mask during that period will help to reduce any chance of spreading the virus," Smith explained. Dowdy noted that compared to other measures that could be enacted (like lockdowns), wearing a mask in public places is arguably not the hardest thing to do. So wearing a mask for 10 days is "the ideal," he said, though he reemphasized the caveat that "we have to be understanding of people for whom this might not be possible."

5) What kind of mask should I wear?

What should I do if I can't get an N95? The best bet is an N95. KN95 masks work great, too.

Even though these masks are in high demand right now, you can still order them from mass suppliers like Walmart or Amazon, or from

retailers like WellBefore, Bona Fide Masks, DemeTECH, and N95 Mask Co. (There may be a shipping lag for some of these masks, so even if you haven't been exposed, it's a good idea to stock up now so you'll be prepared.) "Remember that the fit of the mask is just as important as the type of mask," Dowdy said. "Wearing an N95 without fitting it to your face is defeating the purpose of wearing an N95 in the first place."

If you can't get an N95 or a KN95, the next-best option is a tight-fitting surgical mask. Adding a cloth mask on top of your surgical mask will further help eliminate gaps around your face. If you've been exposed or tested positive, do not rely on a cloth mask alone to prevent you from spreading the virus to others.



6) If I get a negative rapid test result, can I trust the result enough to go see, say, my elderly parents?

It's important to remember that rapid tests aren't perfect — and even with more sensitive tests like PCR, being negative one day doesn't mean you won't be positive in another day or two.

"If you have symptoms or a close contact [with an infected person], I would not trust one negative test," Jetelina said, adding that it's a good idea to retest at least 24 hours later.

Likewise, Smith said, "I would still try to mask around others if you have been exposed, when possible, especially if individuals you may spend time with are in high-risk categories."

She noted that there have been some reports recently that sampling the nose isn't sensitive enough early on to detect omicron infection, and that samples from the throat or saliva may detect it earlier. (Note that these reports are not yet peer-reviewed.) However, we don't yet know if those early throat or saliva samples mean infected individuals are already spreading virus to others. According to Dowdy, it's "really a judgment call at this point" whether you should feel comfortable visiting parents after one negative rapid test result. You have to consider your level of exposure, your parents' health, how long and in what setting you'll be seeing each other, and how both you and your parents weigh the value of seeing each other against the risk of them getting sick.

"If your parents are relatively healthy and you haven't been closely exposed (and are feeling well), it's probably reasonable to trust that negative test result," he said. "If your parents are much more frail and you're living with someone who has Covid in your house, I'd wait." (Vox.com)

Why High Blood Pressure Is Called A “Silent Killer”



Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Most of the time, high blood pressure (HBP, or hypertension) has no obvious symptoms to indicate that something is wrong. The best ways to protect yourself are being aware of the risks and making changes that matter.

A few facts to be aware of:

- Many people with high blood pressure don't even know they have it. Often the signs and symptoms are misunderstood.
- High blood pressure develops slowly over time and can be related to many causes.
- High blood pressure cannot be cured. But it can be managed effectively through lifestyle changes and, when needed, medication.

Know your numbers

Know where you stand by measuring your blood pressure.

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORIES			
BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY			
NORMAL			
LESS THAN 120	AND	LESS THAN 80	
ELEVATED			
120-129	AND	LESS THAN 80	
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (STAGE 1)			
130-139	AND	80-89	
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (STAGE 2)			
140 OR HIGHER	AND	90 OR HIGHER	
HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS			
HIGHER THAN 180	AND	HIGHER THAN 120	

Recognize your risks

Be aware of your risk factors — the physical and lifestyle attributes that can make you more likely to develop high blood pressure.

Awareness of your risks can help you identify positive changes that you can make. Do all you can to avoid the serious problems that can result from your blood pressure being too high for too long. (Courtesy <https://www.heart.org>)

Related

Which foods can help lower blood sugar?

When a person has diabetes, either their body does not produce enough insulin, or it cannot use the insulin correctly, so glucose accumulates in the blood. High levels of blood glucose can cause a range of symptoms, from exhaustion to heart disease.

One way to control blood sugar is to eat a healthful diet. Generally, foods and drinks that the body absorbs slowly are best because they do not cause spikes and dips in blood sugar.

Here is a list of blood pressure lowering

foods that can help: Whole wheat bread, Fruits, Sweet potatoes and yams, Oatmeal and oat bran , Nuts, Legumes (beans) Garlic, Cold-water fish and Yogurt.

Alternative methods

The glycemic index (GI) measures the effects of specific foods on blood sugar levels. People looking to control their levels should pick foods with low or medium GI scores.

A person can also pair foods with low and high GI scores to ensure that a meal is balanced.



Whole wheat or pumpernickel bread



Oatmeal



Vegetables for people with diabetes



Cold water fish. Cod does not contain carbohydrates and may reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Other ways to lower blood sugar levels

Eating a healthful, well-balanced diet is key. Additional strategies to help lower or manage blood sugar levels include: staying hydrated by drinking plenty of

clear liquids, exercising, regularly eating small portions more frequently, not skipping meals, managing or reducing stress, maintaining a healthy body weight or losing weight, if necessary.

People with diabetes may also need to take medications and measure their blood sugar regularly to reduce the risk of potentially dangerous symptoms and complications.

Speak with a doctor about how to incorporate a healthful diet into a diabetes care plan. (Courtesy <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com>)

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SATURDAY APRIL 30, 2022 10AM-1PM

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