

logo not found or type unknown

Dept. of Health Says USVI Has Started Transition From Pandemic to Endemic With Covid-19

Coronavirus / **Published On May 16, 2022 06:03 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **May 16, 2022**

Image not found or type unknown



The V.I. Dept. of Health has stated that the U.S. Virgin Islands is entering the endemic stage in its efforts against Covid-19, an announcement that comes with massive implications regarding how the Bryan administration manages the coronavirus moving forward.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a disease is endemic when it is a constant presence in a population, follow predictable patterns and occur at an expected, baseline level. "To put it another way, an endemic disease is consistently present, but it spreads at predictable rates that can be managed by communities," said the CDC.

The seasonal Influenza, for example, is an endemic disease in the United States. Malaria is an endemic in many parts of the world, with 229 million cases reported 2019.

Dept. of Health Infectious Disease Specialist, Dr. Tai Hunte-Cesar, said Friday the territory is "entering into a state of endemicity where Covid-19 will continuously be prevalent throughout the territory and Covid levels will rise depending on the level of activity and variants circulating among the community."

"Our current positivity rate is 15 percent. However, we are seeing a lower level of sickness in our hospitalized patients," Dr. Hunte-Cesar said. "We began our transition out of the pandemic into endemicity with the relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions. So, let's continue to work together and keep each other safe by doing our part."

According to D.O.H., during this transition period with increased activities, "we will continue to balance our efforts to vaccinate as many as possible and reduce transmission. With the much-needed relaxed restrictions come larger functions. Prevention remains the best way to reduce the risk of long-term complications of Covid infection, known as long Covid, or death."

The health department's announcement comes as the 2022 political season is heating up, and there were discussions regarding whether new restrictions would be implemented by the Bryan administration following the recent surge in cases that the Dept. of Health says was caused by V.I. Carnival events in St. Thomas.

According to the latest [D.O.H. data](#), published on Friday, there were 1,198 active Covid-19 infections territory-wide, with St. Thomas accounting for the bulk of those cases with 787, while St. Croix had 380, followed by St. John with 31. The latest data show St. Croix and St. John with increases in infections, while St. Thomas experienced a decrease compared to [a day earlier](#).

The governor's main challenger in the upcoming general election, Sen. Kurt Vialet, on Thursday [called for temporary restrictions](#) to be put in place to quell the latest rise in cases.

However, with the transition to endemic status Virgin Islanders can expect the continuance of large functions, including election activities and entertainment events. D.O.H. may continue encouraging the use of masks [as it did last week](#), but it is less likely that Governor Bryan will implement another mask mandate.

Yet while the administration has announced the transition to endemic Covid status, the CDC hasn't made this determination. In its [latest update regarding endemic diseases](#), the agency said that when Covid is finally declared an endemic, this may "translate to continued mask wearing in places like public transportation, indoor settings, and offices."

Additionally, the CDC stated, "With good community efforts, high vaccination rates, and improved treatments, Covid-19 can potentially become a predictable disease that communities can cope with, much as they do the seasonal flu.

"For now, vaccination efforts remain a key step in ending the pandemic and transitioning to an endemic."

D.O.H. urged everyone to become proactive about their personal health as well as the health and well-being of others.