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Covid-19 Cases Rise to 595 on St. Croix, Fall to 440 in St. Thomas

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Coronavirus cases in the U.S. Virgin Islands have remained fairly steady following what the V.I. Dept. of Health said was a post-carnival surge early May.

According to the latest data posted Friday, while active cases in St. Thomas have dropped from their [recent high of 953 on May 11](#) to 440 as of Friday, St. Croix numbers have increased from 277 on May 11 [to 440 currently](#). In St. John, active cases nearly tripled from 16 on May 11 to 40 currently.

The current situation is not expected to result in any changes in strategy from the Bryan administration, as the Dept. of Health recently announced that the territory has entered Covid endemic status. That means instead of restrictions, individuals are to simply take precautions to

protect themselves and others, in essence learning to live with the virus.

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 on May 14 that 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.

The governor's main challenger in the upcoming general election, Sen. Kurt Vialet, [on May 13](#) 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, but it is less likely that Governor Bryan will implement another mask mandate.

Yet even as the administration moves the territory to Covid endemic 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."