

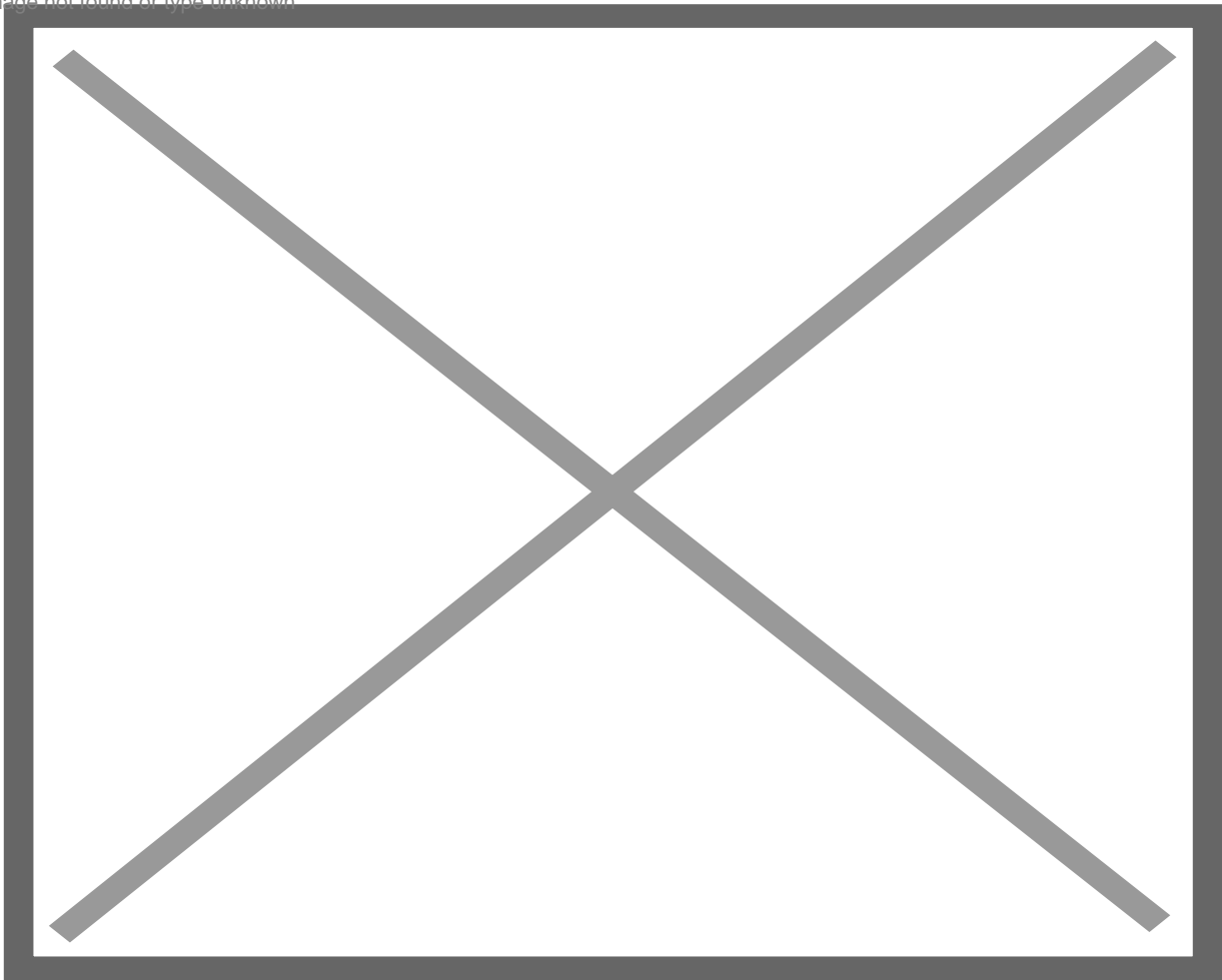
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As Covid Endemicity Takes Hold in USVI, Dept. of Health Issues New Workplace Guidance; Quarantine Lift Letters Being Phased Out

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The V.I. Dept. of Health has released new workplace guidance as part of the U.S. Virgin Islands' transition to endemicity with the coronavirus.

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.

[As of Friday](#) there were 882 active Covid-19 cases territory-wide, with St. Croix accounting for 587 of those cases, followed by St. Thomas with 239, and St. John with 56. The positivity rate

stood at 12.96 percent.

D.O.H. said it is now aligned with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for precautionary recommendations for isolation and quarantine after Covid-19 infection or exposure. These recommendations should be followed and used as guidance for employees, according to the department. They include:

Isolation / Positive Cases

- If found COVID-19 POSITIVE by a viral test you must isolate despite your vaccination status. Day 0 of isolation is the date of the positive test.
- Home tests should be confirmed by a second test collected at the Department or a private laboratory.
- Further, everyone with a positive test result is to isolate for at least 5 full days and remain isolated until you are feeling better and symptoms are improving. If you have been feverfree for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications, you may end isolation as soon as 6 days after your positive viral test.
- Take precautions for a complete 10 days and wear a mask during the entire 10 days especially if you are around someone who is immunocompromised.

You do not have to repeat a test after ending isolation and this should not be a requirement to return to work.

Quarantining / Close Contacts

Quarantining is for anyone exposed to a positive Covid-19 case and it has three distinct categories:

1. If you are NOT UP-TO-DATE on Covid-19 vaccines:

- Quarantine (stay home and away from others) for 5 days
- Wear a mask at home around others
- Watch for symptoms for 10 days
- Everyone in this group should get tested at least 5 days from their exposure even if symptoms do not develop.
- Wear a mask for the entire 10 days regardless of the presence of symptoms.

2. If you are UP-TO-DATE on Covid-19 vaccines (meaning that you have been vaccinated and boosted when eligible):

- No quarantine is needed UNLESS symptoms exist or develop. • Watch for symptoms for 10 days
- Everyone in this group should get tested at least 5 days from their exposure even if symptoms do not develop.

Wear a mask for the entire 10 days regardless of the presence of symptoms.

3. If you had a confirmed case of COVID-19 within the past 90 days:

- No quarantine is needed UNLESS symptoms exist or develop.
- Watch for symptoms for 10 days
- Get tested if symptoms develop.
- Wear a mask for the entire 10 days regardless of the presence of symptoms

Additional Actions

Take the following steps in your departments:

- No agency should be requiring a test to return to work.
- The above guidance should be followed instead of necessitating a quarantine lift letter.
- Routine closure or shutdowns of offices are not recommended because of positive employees.
- Maintain environmental cleaning especially in areas of shared or communal items.

D.O.H. said it is phasing out of the practice of quarantine lift letters and will no longer be providing letters routinely. This guidance should be utilized as the alternative. "We are always available for assistance and questions. We look forward to continued partnerships to ensure the health of your employees. You are encouraged to reference the CDC Covid-19 website for resources on workplace environmental safety specifically relating to your setting," D.O.H. said.

FAQ

1. How can I schedule a test? Tests may be scheduled through this link: <https://www.covid19.usvi.care/testing> or by calling the COVID-19 hotline at 340-712-6299 or 340-776-1519.

You must quarantine while awaiting results. Even if the test results are negative for COVID-19, you should remain in quarantine until symptoms are resolved.

2. Who is up to date on COVID-19 vaccinations? Link: [CDC: Stay Up to Date with Your COVID-19 Vaccines](#)

You are up to date with your Covid-19 vaccines when you have received all doses in the primary series and one booster when eligible.

Getting a second booster is not necessary to be considered up to date at this time, D.O.H. said.

The recommendations will be different depending on your age, your health status, what vaccine you first received, and when you first got vaccinated.