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Dept. of Health Monitoring Increase in Covid-19 Cases; Vaccine-Resistant BA.5 Variant Confirmed in USVI

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Territorial Epidemiologist Dr. Esther Ellis on Monday announced an increase in the number of active Covid-19 cases in the USVI. Dr. Ellis also confirmed the presence of the BA.5 Covid-19 strain in the territory, stating that the variant is more resistant to Covid vaccines.

“Please note that we do have the presence of the new variants, BA.4 and BA.5,” she said during the Bryan administration's weekly press briefing. “These variants are more resistant to the current vaccine.”

The department recorded 20 cases on St. John, down from last week's 32 cases and a marked increase from the weeks that preceded the St. John Carnival.

According to Gov't House, Dr. Ellis said it is projected that there will be a new formulation of the vaccines available in the fall that are more effective against the new variants.

“This new formulation is similar to our annual flu vaccines that vary depending on the variant that is most prevalent during that season,” she said. “We will let everyone know when that vaccine becomes available.”

As of Monday, there were 208 active Covid-19 cases territory-wide: 138 on St. Croix, 55 on St. Thomas and 20 on St. John. The territory-wide seven-day positivity rate stood at 12.4 percent. Additionally, there were two Covid-19 patients hospitalized at Luis Hospital on St. Croix, and four at the Schneider Regional Medical Center.

Dr. Ellis also reminded residents that schedules for free vaccinations and testing have changed as of July 1.

Adult Vaccinations

The Community Vaccination Center (CVC) at Schneider Hospital on St. Thomas will be open from 9 a.m. to noon and 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. on Mondays through Thursdays. To make an appointment, call 340-774-7447.

Free vaccinations at the CVC at the Charles Harwood Complex on St. Croix are available from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Monday and Wednesdays. To make an appointment, call 340-718-1311 ext. 3895 or ext. 3822.

On St. John, free vaccinations for all ages are available by appointment only at the Morris DeCastro Clinic by calling 340-776-6400.

Pediatric Vaccinations

For children 6 months to 4 years old, the Pfizer-BioNtech vaccine has been authorized as a three-dose primary series, and for children ages 5-17, the vaccine continues to be authorized as a two-dose primary series. The Moderna vaccine also is authorized for children ages 6 months to 5 years old as a two-dose primary series.

Pediatric vaccinations (ages 5 to 17) and infant vaccinations (ages 6 months to 5 years) are available on St. Thomas at the Maternal and Child Health Clinic from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays and Fridays, and on St. Croix under the tent at the Charles Harwood Complex from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Fridays.

On St. John, free vaccinations for all ages are available by appointment only at the Morris DeCastro Clinic by calling 340-776-6400.

Parents and guardians can set up an appointment by calling 340-777-8804 ext. 2600 on St. Thomas or 340-244-0016 on St. Croix or by going to covid19usvi.com/vaccines. Residents are reminded to bring an ID for the parent or guardian, as well as the infant or child's ID and a copy of the birth certificate.

Anyone who thinks they may have contracted COVID-19 can call the Epidemiology hotline at 340-712-6299 (STX) or 340-776-1519 (STT-STJ). For more information, visit covid19usvi.com.