

logo not found or type unknown

## Dept. of Health Urging Vaccination, Anticipates Highly Contagious XBB.1.5 Strain of Covid as St. Croix Cases Surge to 247

Coronavirus / **Published On January 21, 2023 05:46 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **January 21, 2023**

Image not found or type unknown



The V.I. Dept. of Health on Friday urged residents to take steps aimed at protecting their health as cases of Covid-19 continue to surge on St. Croix, with the department registering 247 cases on the island as of Friday.

D.O.H. is also anticipating the arrival of the XBB.1.5 Omicron variant of Covid-19, the latest highly contagious strain that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says is accounting for 43 percent of all cases on the U.S. mainland.

With these worrying trends unfolding, Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion has been encouraging residents to get vaccinated with the newer bi-valent vaccine, which has been

specifically formulated to provide protection from the past Covid-19 variants like Beta and Delta, as well as the newer Omicron and its subvariants like XBB1.1 and XBB1.5. The bi-valent vaccine is available throughout the territory and is currently the best protection residents can obtain to prevent severe illness and hospitalization, D.O.H. said.

According to the health department, in late summer of last year, the CDC recommended that the original monovalent vaccine no longer be used as a booster because studies showed the vaccine to be ineffective for fighting Omicron variants. Instead, the CDC recommended the bi-valent vaccine be administered for all future booster shots.

On September 6, 2022 the V.I. Dept. of Health announced the availability of the new bi-valent vaccine for both adults and children as booster doses.

"Since then, 3,277 individuals have been boosted with the bi-valent vaccine in the Virgin Islands. Please note, the original monovalent vaccine is still being given to persons receiving their first and second vaccines," D.O.H. said.

Vaccination sites are as follows:

### **St. Croix**

For adults: On the second floor of #35 Castle Coakley Unit 5, known as the Old Caribe Home Center Building. The hours of operation for the COVID-19 and Influenza vaccine clinics are 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday.

No appointments are necessary for vaccines. For information please call: The Community Health Clinic at 340-718-1311, extension 3760 or 3796.

For children: Vaccines are available at the Maternal Child Health Clinic also in the Old Caribe Home Center Building (#35 Castle Coakley Unit 5). For more information please telephone: 340-718-1311, extension 3201 or 3875.

### **St. Thomas**

For Adults: Vaccines are available in the Community Health Clinic on the second floor of the Schneider Regional Medical Center. Monday–Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon and 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Anyone wanting a FLU vaccine on St. Thomas is asked to call (340) 774-7477 to arrange an appointment.

For children: Vaccines are available at the Maternal Child Health Clinic. Appointments can be made by telephoning: 340-777-8804 ext. 2600.

### **St. John**

Vaccinations are available as part of the Wednesday Pop Up Testing event conducted in the V.I. Port Authority Gravel Lot. Vaccines are available between 1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. and testing is conducted between 12:00 noon to 3:00 p.m.

### **Testing sites territory-wide:**

- St. Croix Monday thru Friday, 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. in the Charles Harwood Memorial parking lot.

- St. Thomas Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday – 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at the Schneider Regional Medical Center loading dock.
- St. John on Wednesday from 12:00 noon to 3:00 p.m. at the VIPA gravel lot.

D.O.H. is also urging residents who have administered the at-home Covid-19 tests and have received positive results, to get a confirmation test through the health department. "Persons who test positive in conformation testing done by the VIDOH are eligible for medications that can lessen the severity of the illness, possibly shorten its duration, and help avert hospitalization," the department said.

"Virgin Islanders are reminded that although the best source of protection from Covid-19, vaccines are just one of the measures to help stop the spread of the virus," D.O.H. said. "Residents are urged to also wear mask or facial covering when in crowded areas, practice social distance from persons with whom you do not reside, and to frequently wash or sanitize your hands regardless of your vaccination status."

As of Friday there were 296 active Covid-19 cases territory-wide: 247 on St. Croix, 45 on St. Thomas and 4 on St. John, according to [data from the Dept. of Health](#). The territory's positivity rate stood at 15.9 percent.