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As Carnival and Easter Approach, Health Commissioner Urges Covid Vigilance Even as Infections Trend Lower

Health / **Published On March 28, 2023 05:26 AM /**

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"Make protecting yourself and your family part of your planning" for Easter and Carnival, said Justa Encarnacion, commissioner of the Department of Health at Monday's Government House press briefing. "We want everyone to be mindful that Covid is still with us, along with the 'flu virus."

Despite continuing low numbers of Covid-19 cases in the territory – only 17 active (11 on STT, 4 on STX, 2 on STJ) with two patients hospitalized and a territorial positivity rate of 2.1 percent – Ms. Encarnacion noted that it was still circulating, and further noted the social nature of the upcoming holiday season.

The commissioner urged frequent hand washing and hand sanitizer use, and encouraged people to “feel comfortable wearing a mask, especially if you have a compromised immune system.” Travelers were also urged to opt to wear masks on airplanes. Flu shots and bivalent Covid-19 boosters were also suggested to ensure protection against serious illness.

Although the free Covid-19 testing service remains unavailable from D.O.H., Ms. Encarnacion strongly advised people who test negative at home but continue to feel ill, or those who test positive on a home test, to get a confirmation test at a laboratory. A positive lab test result is needed to access antiviral treatments, which not only reduce acute symptoms and the length of the illness, but also work to protect against the onset of Long Covid symptoms as well, according to the health commissioner.

Ms. Encarnacion also informed the public that the Department of Health had received a demolition permit for the Charles Harwood Memorial Complex, “bringing us one step closer to the construction of the new state-of-the-art facility.” She promised that the department would hold a press conference “within the next two weeks” to provide further details on the demolition process and what the public needs to know.