

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Department of Health Addresses Misinformation Regarding New Covid Health Advisory

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In a recent development, the V.I. Department of Health has swiftly moved to debunk the circulating rumors suggesting the issuance of a new health advisory related to the Covid variant XBB.

Misleading posts on various social media platforms claimed that this purported advisory recommends the wearing of masks, especially a double layer, and urges people to practice social distancing, warning about the deadliness and undetectability of variant XBB.

In a statement, Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion clarified, "The information circulating on social media is false." She further noted that there has been no such advisory from the department mandating double masks or social distancing. "Although the choice to wear a mask remains personal, we encourage individuals to wear one if feeling unwell, to safeguard others," Ms. Encarnacion stated.

Dr. Esther Ellis, the Territorial Epidemiologist for D.O.H., emphasized that the [prevailing variant is EG.5](#), which doesn't exhibit increased risk than its predecessors. "Moreover, while XBB may be more transmissible, it hasn't shown to cause more severe illness or elevate hospitalization rates," DR. Ellis added.

Highlighting the effectiveness of vaccination, the department is urging residents to get vaccinated as a primary defense against Covid-19, available for everyone aged 6 and above.

Vaccination Details:

- St. Croix: Drop in at the Department of Health clinic, #35 Castle Coakley Unit 5, Monday to Thursday between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. No appointment is needed.
- St. Thomas (Adults): Visit the Community Health Clinic at Schneider Regional Medical Center, Monday to Thursday from 9 a.m. to noon. For the FLU vaccine, ring (340) 774-7477 for booking. For children, appointments can be made at the Maternal Child Health Clinic by calling 340-777-8804 ext. 2600.

Drive-thru Covid testing:

- St. Croix: Next to DOH's red modulars in Estate Richmond, weekdays from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.
- St. Thomas: Schneider Regional Medical Center loading dock, Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.
- St. John: VIPA Gravel Lot, Wednesdays from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m.

To schedule a test, visit <https://www.covid19.usvi.care/> or dial the VIDOH Hotline: (340) 712-6299 for St. Croix and 340-776-1519 for St. Thomas-St. John, available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday.

In case of COVID-like symptoms, the VI Department of Health strongly recommends getting tested.