



**GOVERNMENT OF  
THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES**

**VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Bi-Valent COVID-19 Vaccine Encouraged During Current Surge in Cases**

**US Virgin Islands** — Commissioner of Health Justa Encarnacion is urging the public to become more aware of the current COVID-19 situation on St. Croix and to become more vigilant about protecting themselves from becoming ill.

On St. Croix, case numbers have grown steadily over the last couple of weeks. Active cases and hospitalizations stateside are also at high levels due largely to the new XBB.1.5 variant which is far more contagious than previous variants. CDC data on XBB.1.5 shows this variant accounted for 43.0% of all cases seen in the U.S. during the week of January 8-14, 2023.<sup>1</sup>

To date, NO cases of XBB.1.5 have been identified in any of the serology analysis returned to the V.I. by CDC. However, the VIDOH anticipates this may change soon since the Territory historically experiences a delayed response when new variants emerge.

The newer bi-valent vaccine 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.

In late Summer 2022 CDC recommended the original monovalent vaccine no longer be used as a booster because studies showed the vaccine to be ineffective for fighting Omicron variants. Instead, CDC recommended the bi-valent vaccine be administered for all future booster shots. On September 6, 2022 the VIDOH announced the availability of the new bi-valent vaccine for both adults and

<sup>1</sup> [CDC COVID Data Tracker: Summary of Variant Surveillance](#)

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.

Free bi-valent vaccines are available through the Department of Health at the following locations:

**On 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.

**On 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.

**On 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.

If you are ill please get tested. Testing is FREE and remains available as follows:

**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, and

**St. John** on Wednesday from 12:00 noon to 3:00 p.m. at the VIPA gravel lot.

If you have taken a COVID-19 home test and the result is positive, it is important that you get a confirmation test through the VIDOH. 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.

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. 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.