



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

VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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PRESS RELEASE

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**Department of Health to Host
“Breathe Easy Virgin Islands” Asthma Forums**

St. Croix, US Virgin Islands — The Virgin Islands Department of Health (DOH), in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), are hosting the “Breathe Easy Virgin Islands” Asthma Awareness Forum on Saturday, July 17, 2021, from 9:30 a.m. to Noon.

This community engagement activity is the first in a series of free webinars focused on raising awareness about asthma and how it can be controlled. People with asthma can prevent asthma attacks if they learn how to avoid asthma triggers like tobacco smoke, mold, outdoor air pollution, and colds and flu. Asthma episodes can also be prevented by using inhaled corticosteroids and other prescribed daily long-term control medicines correctly.

Over 22 million people living in the United States have asthma, a lifelong chronic disease that affects the lungs. Asthma can cause wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness, and coughing. Although asthma cannot be cured, it is possible to manage asthma to reduce and prevent asthma attacks, also called episodes.

There are different types of asthma. In certain individuals, chest tightness and breathlessness occur mainly at night. Others feel symptoms when they exercise, and many are triggered by airborne irritants such as bug spray, dust, and pet dander. Asthma attacks cause adults to miss

work and children to miss school. These dangerous and sometimes life-threatening episodes reduce their quality of life.

The event will be co-hosted by DOH Commissioner Justa E. Encarnacion and Dr. Lyna Fredericks, Acting Director of the Chronic Disease and Prevention Division. Presenters from the CDC and EPA will provide an overview of asthma and how to manage episodes. Discussions will also cover mold, its impact on asthma, and the importance of preparing for hurricanes and other disasters.

Commissioner Encarnacion encourages families of children with asthma, asthmatics, teachers, and others who interact with children to attend the webinar. “While asthma is not curable, it is critical for individuals to know their triggers and manage exposure to risk factors such as secondhand smoke and mold.” She added, “Our theme this year is ‘Breathe Easy Virgin Islands,’ and we encourage people with asthma and their loved ones to learn as much as they can about this chronic disease. It is vital for individuals to partner with their healthcare providers to develop a customized asthma management plan.”

According to Acting Director Fredericks, “We are finalizing details for an asthma seminar for healthcare professionals. Asthma is a chronic disease which affects many of our residents. The Chronic Disease and Prevention Division remains committed to providing information and resources to make it easier for people to make healthy choices. Information for that webinar will be announced shortly.”

The July 17 webinar will be streamed live on the <https://www.facebook.com/virginislandsDOH>. Individuals seeking more information may call (340) 718 - 1311 extension 3798.

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