



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

VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

ST. CROIX OFFICE
3500 ESTATE RICHMOND
CHRISTIANSTED, ST. CROIX, U.S.V.I. 00820-4370
CHARLES HARWOOD MEMORIAL COMPLEX
TEL: (340)718-6551 * FAX: (340)718-1376

ST. THOMAS OFFICE
1303 HOSPITAL GROUND, SUITE 10
CHARLOTTE AMALIE
ST. THOMAS, U.S.V.I. 00802-6722
TEL: (340)774-0117 * FAX: (340)777-4001

PRESS RELEASE

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Jahnesta Ritter
Director of Public Relations
340-718-1311 ext. 3671
Jahnesta.Ritter@doh.vi.gov

**Department of Health Confirms
COVID-19 Delta Variant in the Territory**

St. Croix, US Virgin Islands (July 21, 2021) - The Department of Health confirms that the Delta variant of COVID-19 has been identified in the territory as health officials continue to push to get more Virgin Islanders vaccinated.

The Department of Health's Division of Epidemiology has been working with Yale University to test samples from positive COVID-19 cases. Thus far, 84 samples have shown to be variants from sequencing. Of the 84 cases, 65 have been of the Alpha variant (B.1.1.7) which is also known as "the UK Variant." Six samples have been B.1.526.2 (Iota) OR B.1.351 (Beta), and one sample B.1.429 (Epsilon).

Preliminary results showed 12 samples were not confirmed to be any of the variants that have been previously identified in the territory.

Full sequencing results now show that two of the 12 samples not previously identified in the territory are confirmed to be of the Delta variant (B.1.617.2).

New cases continue to rise amongst unvaccinated individuals. As of July 20th, there are 165 cases in the territory and the positivity rate is 4.13%. With this surge in positive cases there is a

greater chance for the virus to mutate. Identifying this variant in one district only indicates to us that it has already covered the whole territory as inter-island travel heightens the spread.

The Delta strain is now the dominant strain in the United States and is highly contagious. Mutations can make the virus more virulent and could potentially cause it to be resistant to the vaccine in the future. The sooner more residents get vaccinated, the risk of the virus mutating will decrease.

Hospitalizations and deaths related to COVID-19 are preventable because the vaccines are protective against all known variants and are readily accessible across the territory. The hesitancy or unwillingness to get vaccinated also harms our efforts to achieve community immunity.

Anyone 12 and older can get the COVID-19 vaccine by walking into any of our Community Vaccination Centers, by calling (340) 777-8227 or by scheduling yourself online at covid19usvi.com/vaccines.

St. Croix's Community Vaccination Center is located at the Nissan Center on St. Croix which is in La Grande Princesse, adjacent to the Honda Dealership and The Paint Shop, on the same side of the street as Food Town.

On St. Thomas the Community Vaccination Center is located at the Community Health Clinic on the 2nd floor at the Schneider Regional Medical Center.

The COVID-19 vaccine has proven to save lives and as more people in our community get vaccinated, the chance of fast-spreading mutations affecting the territory decreases.

The department's epidemiology hotline remains open 7 days a week from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. for callers to report suspected cases of COVID-19 at (340) 712-6299 OR (340) 776-1519. We are also offering free vaccines at our pop-up testing sites weekly.

Anyone can pre-register for pop-up testing online at covid19usvi.com/testing. The following are our upcoming events:

St. Croix at the Charles Harwood Complex:
Thursday, July 22nd from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

St. Thomas at the Fort Christian Parking Lot
Thursday, July 22nd from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

St. John at the VIPA Gravel Yard:
Wednesday, July 21st from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

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