

Strengthening of COVID-19 Protocols

Friday, August 27, 2021
by Ministry of Health



THE MEASURES TAKE EFFECT SATURDAY, AUG. 28.

Greetings to you, my fellow Saint Lucians, visitors to our beautiful island home and to all who are viewing or listening to me. The health professionals at our Ministry of Health, Wellness and Elderly Affairs here in Saint Lucia, have advised that we are still in the middle of what is described as a COVID-19 wave. More confirmed COVID-19 cases have been reported over the last few weeks and people, both young and old continue to die as a direct result of COVID-19 and COVID-19 related illness.

Let us take a look at the current situation. Over the last 14 days 1,376 new cases were noted and we have 1,717 active cases in country. We have noted 6 COVID-19 deaths over the last 14 day period. These statistics are used to trigger action at all levels of government.

With this current situation, there is the urgent need for us to do much more as individuals and as a community to fight this virus. As I have said to you before, this is a war and we must win, for there can be no viable economy or robust development if we are sick. The protocols to limit the gathering of people in large groups will therefore be strengthened with the hope to reduce the spread of infection and eventually stop it.

Over the last three weeks, the priority of your new government has been to provide much needed additional support to the arms of the public health system, which manage COVID-19 directly. We have commenced actions to improve the conditions at the Respiratory Hospital to ensure compassionate quality of care. The testing capacity at the Ezra Long Laboratory has improved and we note an increase of up to 5 times in the daily testing numbers during the last 7 days.

An increase in the number of contact tracers has improved the timeliness of this important process in disease management. We are now able to alert the positive cases and their contacts within a reduced time period.

Vaccination coverage at the level of the community is steadily improving. During the course of this week we noted up to 100% increase in the number of people who turned out daily to get vaccinated. During the month of July 2021 we administered a total of 4,145 doses of vaccines. For August 1, 2021 to August 26, 2021 the data shows a total of 8,297 doses of vaccines.

In Saint Lucia, we continue to note the benefits of being fully vaccinated. To date 100% of patients hospitalized for COVID-19 are unvaccinated. 100% of COVID-19 deaths and COVID-

19 related deaths are unvaccinated. Only 1.6% of fully vaccinated persons have contracted COVID-19 with very mild symptoms or asymptomatic and making a full recovery.

Due to the confirmation of the Delta Variant in country, it is even more important that all recommended public health measures are taken to protect our health and well-being. The public is urged to avoid social activities and to get vaccinated at the soonest.

The vaccines are available free of charge on a daily basis at the various wellness centers around the island. Please contact your nurse at the wellness centers as soon as possible. Although we do not mandate vaccination, we encourage the public to follow the science and get vaccinated to keep themselves and family safe.

We are working to improve the effectiveness of regular communication to the public in both English and Kweyol, to ensure the dissemination of timely and relevant information. In addition to daily updates in relation to new infections, key public health officials will be disseminating information on COVID-19 at a specific time every day during the week. More information on this new programme will be announced next week.

Measures to control the spread of COVID-19 are also being strengthened at our ports of entry. This week, health officials along with other partners started inspections of the main ports of entry to improve on the present system and improve efficiencies both in relation to structure and function at ports of entry.

After a review of the current trend in COVID-19 infections, Prime Minister Hon. Philip J. Pierre called an emergency Cabinet meeting on Thursday August 26, 2021. The Chief Medical Officer updated the Cabinet on the current COVID-19 situation. Indicators, risks and national trends associated with the current infection wave were discussed. Risks associated with the tourism sector, transportation sector, social activities, bars and the call centers were specifically examined and discussions on actions within each sector or area of concern are ongoing with the relevant representatives of sectors and agencies.

In an effort to urgently address the current spike in cases, the Cabinet of Ministers have agreed to the following measures effective Saturday August 28, 2021 to Monday September 6, 2021:

- Work from home and blended approaches at work places along with the strengthening of infection prevention and control measures at all sectors
- Adjustment to the curfew times
 - } Saturday August 28, 2021 curfew starts from 4pm and ends on Sunday August 29, 2021 at 4am
 - } Sunday August 29, 2021 curfew starts from 1pm and ends on Monday August 30, 2021 at 4am
 - } Monday August 30, 2021 to Friday September 3, 2021 curfew starts every day from 7pm
 - } Saturday September 4, 2021 curfew starts from 4pm and ends on Monday September 6, 2021 at 4am. This means there is a curfew all day Sunday
- Minibus operators to travel with a maximum of 10 passengers per load
- Prohibition of all social activities, and family household activities limited to 10 per household

A review of the public health data and indicators will be carried out in the next 7 days to guide any further measures to be implemented.

We continue to appeal to the public to take personal responsibility to safeguard health and wellbeing of each individual, their family and community.