

HEALTH PROFESSIONALS HAVE NOTED A SLOWING OF THE COVID-19 TRANSMISSION RATE.

Fellow Saint Lucians, our country continues to battle this deadly wave of Covid- 19 which from all indications, continues to be fueled by the Delta variant of the virus. Just this week, the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) reported another nine (9) confirmed cases of the destructive Delta variant out of samples which were sent weeks earlier, confirming the suspicion of the spread of this is a more transmissible Covid-19 variant. It is clear that the virus continues to spread throughout our communities affecting people of all age groups. Sadly, since the start of this wave in the middle of July 2021 to September 26, 2021 we recorded 5,703 cases at an average of 91 cases per day. Most of the cases are in the age group 25-49 years, the majority female and the largest number of cases come from Castries, Gros- Islet, Vieux-Fort and Babboneau.

During the period of the surge in cases, we note, unfortunately, ninety-four (94) COVID-19 deaths with females accounting for most of the deaths. At present, we have 1,539 active cases.

We continue to prioritize the immunization program in Saint Lucia and we note an increase uptake over the last few weeks with a total of 45,245 persons receiving the first dose of vaccines and 31, 520 second dose of vaccines to date of both the AstraZeneca and Pfizer. It is encouraging to see a steady increase in the number of Saint Lucians taking the vaccine over the last few weeks. Additional sites have been established for administering the vaccines and all Saint Lucians are encouraged to take the vaccines along with their families.

While our health professionals have indicated a slowing of the Covid-19 transmission rate, the number of active cases remains unacceptably high and there is still a great risk of danger to families and our communities if we continue to dismiss the seriousness of the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on our country. We therefore must continue to be vigilant and keep restrictions in place while we prepare to allow fully vaccinated individuals to benefit from accessing specific approved services.

Sisters and brothers, we must think not only of our families but of the front line medical and other emergency personnel who put their lives on the line daily to keep law and order, to assist with the transfer of affected people, to care for the sick and to clean and sanitize the medical institutions. Workers in all sectors are also exposed and if all of us make a personal commitment to take action and follow the recommendations of the medical professionals, we will cause the transmission rate to continue to slow and eventually reduce transmission significantly.

The new changes to the protocols are as follows:

Operation of businesses:

- i. Businesses shall cease operations on Friday 1 st day of October, 2021 at 7pm to Saturday the 2 nd day of October, 2021 at 4a.m.
- ii. On Saturday the 2 nd day of October, 2021 businesses will close from 7pm to Tuesday the 5 th day of October, 2021 at 4 a.m. The curfew or no movement days will extend from Saturday 2 nd October from 7pm, all day Sunday, all day Monday up to Tuesday 5 th October at 4.am
- iii. From Tuesday 5 th October to Friday 8 th October 2021, businesses will close from 6pm to 4 a.m each day.

iv. From Saturday the 9th of October, 2021, businesses will close from 3pm to Monday the 11th day of October 2021.

v. Businesses will close from 6pm to 4am each day from Monday the 11th of October to Friday the 15th of October, 2021.

Changes in relation to restaurants and food establishments:

i. A restaurant and other food establishments approved by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Tourism may provide a dine-in service to persons who are fully vaccinated Please note that fully vaccinated means that two weeks have passed since a person received

a. A single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson and Johnson

b. the second dose in a two-dose series of Astrazeneca, Pfizer BioNTech or Moderna or

c. Another Covid-19 vaccine approved by the Minister on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer.

The sale and disposal of intoxicating liquor is suspended except for

a. the sale and manufacture of hand sanitizers

b. the manufacture for sale outside of Saint Lucia

c. the sale and disposal by a supermarket, gas station or wholesaler , if the supermarket, gas station or wholesaler does not permit a person to consume the intoxicating liquor on the licensed premises.

Recreational Activities

Recreational activities such as boat rides, and water skiing at a certified accommodation provider are suspended during the curfew hours are suspended on Sunday the 3rd day of October, 2021, Monday the 4th day of October 2021 and Sunday the 10th day of October 2021.

Faith based organizations:

i. May continue to hold daily or regular religious ceremonies if the physical distancing protocols are adhered to.

ii. Special religious rites including baptisms, weddings and funerals are to be held using physical distancing rules with no more than fifty persons in attendance.

These changes to the general protocols are intended to bring down the number of persons who may be infected with the Covid-19 virus. I urge all Saint Lucians to join with leaders within their communities and mobilize to get the communities vaccinated, join in our efforts to get life back to normal.

I thank you.

NOTA: se reprodujo íntegramente comunicado del ministro de salud de Santa Lucía, en que señaló nuevas medidas contra la propagación del COVID-19.