



PRESS STATEMENT

**The Hon. Renward R. Wells, M.P.
Minister of Health**

**Ministry of Health
7th April, 2021
3:00p.m.**

Good Afternoon, Bahamas!

Here is the latest national COVID-19 Report.

On Tuesday, 6th April, 2021, there were **26** newly confirmed cases of COVID-19. This brings the total number of confirmed cases in The Bahamas to **9,296**.

Currently, there are **9** moderately ill COVID-19 patients hospitalized in the Grand Bahama Health Care System. There are no patients currently in intensive care in Grand Bahama.

In New Providence, there are **14** hospitalized COVID-19 patients at Doctor's Hospital. **Eleven** are moderately ill and **3** are currently in the Intensive Care Unit.

There are **2** moderately ill COVID-19 patients being treated at the South Beach Acute Care and Referral Centre.

At the Princess Margaret Hospital, there are **7** moderately ill patients with COVID-19. There are no patients in the ICU at PMH at this time.

In all, there are **240** active cases of COVID-19. **Eighty-two** persons have been recently classified as recovered from COVID-19. This brings the total number of recoveries to **8,811**, for a recovery rate of **94.8%**.

Fortunately, there were no deaths confirmed yesterday. The total number of confirmed COVID-19 deaths now stands at **189**. **Seventeen** deaths remain under investigation. One COVID-19 death to us in the Ministry of Health, as I've said previously, is still one too many. We continue to pray for the families in The Bahamas who have lost loved ones to this persistent plague, this unrelenting COVID-19 pandemic.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A total of **78,357** RTPCR tests have been carried out for COVID-19 in the country. **240** tests were performed yesterday, with **26** positives and **210** negatives. **Four** tests were repeated to determine recoveries. There were no inconclusive test results.

On behalf of the Government of The Bahamas, we again thank the nurses, doctors, emergency medical services, and other essential

healthcare workers for their continued dedication and devotion to caring for COVID-19 patients. We also thank their families.

My fellow Bahamian & Residents

The Ministry of Health has been closely monitoring the increase in the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations since March 2021.

There has been a marked increase in COVID-19 positive cases on the islands of New Providence, Grand Bahama and Abaco. The same trend has also been noted on the island of Eleuthera.

Last week, a health team was dispatched to Eleuthera to assess and intensify contact tracing activities there, with special emphasis on Harbour Island.

The team completed the following tasks:

1. Determined the number of COVID-19 positive cases;
2. Assessed whether there was a need for widespread testing;

3. Evaluated the manpower on the ground to enforce policies and procedures;
4. Commenced the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccinations;
5. Made recommendations for improvements which include the acquisition of additional staff to augment the existing staff complement on the island and to encourage residents and visitors to adhere to the public health guidelines.
6. The health team trained personnel on updated protocols for quarantine and isolation.

Due to limited staff, difficulties were noted in conducting complete contact tracing activities and enforcing quarantine and isolation measures on Harbour Island.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Notably, there has been an overall increase in the number of hospitalizations in The Bahamas since March 2021.

Hospitalizations for March 2021 were highest on Grand Bahama followed by New Providence. However, based on yesterday's data, hospitalizations in Grand Bahama decreased. Health officials will continue to monitor this situation.

Currently, there are a total of 23 beds available on Grand Bahama for COVID-19 patients – 16 beds at the Cancer Association of The Bahamas, and seven (7) beds at the Infectious Disease Centre.

The Ministry of Health stands ready to cope with the current number of hospitalizations in country.

My fellow Bahamians and Residents

With the emergence of COVID-19 variants in the United States of America, the question continues to arise, are any COVID-19 variants in The Bahamas?

Fifty-two (52) COVID-19 positive samples collected from New Providence, Grand Bahama, Eleuthera, Exuma, Bimini and Andros were sent to the Fiocruz Laboratory in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil for baseline genomic sequencing analysis.

Twenty-eight (28) of these samples were successfully sequenced. None of the samples was found to have COVID-19 variants of public health concern.

When a variant is of public health concern this means it can affect the transmissibility of the COVID-19 virus or affect the efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccine being administered.

The results show that there is no evidence of variants of public health concern in The Bahamas at the time the samples were taken. However, our healthcare professionals remain vigilant in this regard.

The National Reference Laboratory received reagents to conduct initial screening for the mutations that characterize variants of concern. Additionally, the laboratory will utilize RT-PCR based techniques to detect these variants.

These tests will provide further insight into the transmission and prevalence of variants of concern in The Bahamas in real-time.

This testing will also help the National Reference Laboratory to prioritize samples for genomic sequencing.

Ten (10) samples collected in March 2021 were sent to the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) this past week to conduct sequencing.

The National Reference Laboratory has also developed a new National Respiratory Surveillance Genomics Database, where COVID-19 genomic sequencing will be deposited for genetic analysis at a higher level. This will improve surveillance data and epidemiological decision making.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we emerge from the Easter celebrations, let us continually reflect on the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Yeshua, the Christ. We are grateful to Almighty God, The Lord of life, for this season of life. In appreciation for the sanctity of life, let us continue to adhere to the public health precautions. Wear your masks, continually practice social distancing, avoid large gatherings and do not forget to frequently wash your hands.

We must not let our guards down. We must continue to take the necessary precautions. We must work hard to prevent the possibility of a third wave.

My fellow Bahamians and Residents,

COVID-19 vaccinations are now available in-country for specific priority groups. The Vaccination Campaign has been moving along successfully.

So far, The Bahamas has received a total of 53,600 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine.

Twenty thousand doses were received as a gift from the Government of India. 33,600 doses were received through the COVAX Facility with the assistance of the Pan American Health Organization. I am grateful to have here present the Pan American Health newly appointed Country Representative Dr. Eldonna Boissin . We welcome her participation here in this press conference today.

Continuing with PAHO, The Bahamas is scheduled to receive an additional 67,200 vaccines through the COVAX Facility.

The Government continues to work on all fronts to secure additional vaccines from approved providers.

To date, more than 10,000 first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine have been administered to Bahamians and residents. We are vaccinating over 1,000 individuals per day and we are actively working to increase this number. Vaccines have been administered at centres in New Providence, Grand Bahama and Eleuthera.

Currently, vaccinations are open to the following persons at this time:

- Healthcare workers;
- Persons 60 years of age and older;
- Uniformed branches (the Royal Bahamas Police Force, the Royal Bahamas Defence Force, the Bahamas Departments of Corrections, Customs, Immigration, and COVID-19 Ambassadors);
- Teachers and staff of schools;

- Homebound, physically challenged residents;
- Students and athletes studying or competing abroad; and
- Hospitality workers (hotel and resort employees, public transportation workers, Lynden Pindling International Airport workers, Nassau Airport Development Company, Nassau Cruise Port workers, the Straw Market, port and beach vendors and tour operators).

Others will soon be added to this expanding list.

Vaccinations resumed today after the Easter holidays at Loyola Hall and Church of God, East Street on New Providence, and at the Susan J. Wallace Community Centre on Grand Bahama.

Additional vaccination sites will open on New Providence this week.

On Thursday the 8th of April, the Kendal G.L. Isaacs Gymnasium will be used as a vaccination centre.

On Friday the 9th of April, vaccination sites will be opened at the Atlantis and Baha Mar resorts for hospitality workers,

To make an appointment online visit www.vax.gov.bs.

Those who do not have access to the internet on New Providence may utilize the Church of God of Prophecy, East Street site.

For general inquiries about the COVID-19 vaccine, please call 502-7382 Monday to Friday between the hours of 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., the COVID-19 hotline at 376-9350 every day between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. or 511.

Health officials and the National COVID-19 Vaccine Consultative Committee will continue to provide regular updates as it relates to the roll-out and distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine.

I take this opportunity to encourage all to take the vaccine at the earliest opportunity when it becomes available for your group or subset of our population.

Before going to your vaccine appointment ensure that you have a good night's sleep. Rest can assist with your immune system's response and functionality. Also, eat a meal and drink some water. Do not go to your appointment hungry or thirsty. If you are on medication, remember to take your medication as usual.

The Ministry of Health is aware that some Bahamians may have obtained their COVID-19 vaccine in the United States. The Ministry of Health requests that persons who have obtained a vaccine from outside of The Bahamas relay that information to us.

- call 502-7283, 376-9350 or 511;
- report that you have already taken the vaccine; and
- leave your name, the date you received the vaccination and the country where the vaccine was obtained.

This allows the Ministry of Health to update its local records and properly allocate vaccines and to properly account for you.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we work to limit the spread of the virus through vaccination: stay disciplined. Be vigilant. Take personal responsibility and continually apply public health preventative measures.

Let us continue to work together to make our country safe from COVID-19. May the Lord of Life, our God, bless you and continue to

keep you and may He bless and keep your family, and may God Almighty continue to bless and keep this great Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

CMO.....