



Department of Health & Wellness

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March 29, 2020

Press Release

SAINT LUCIA RECORDS FIVE NEW CASES OF COVID-19

As of March 28, 2020, the World Health Organization reported a total of 571, 678 confirmed cases of COVID-19 globally with 26, 494 deaths. There are now 100, 314 confirmed cases in the region of the Americas.

On Sunday, March 29, 2020 the Ezra Long Laboratory at the Owen King EU Hospital reported a total of five new cases of COVID-19. This now brings the total number of COVID-19 cases recorded nationally to nine (9) to date.

Case One is a 24 year old female with travel history to New York. She was quarantined at home and presented at our health facility on March 27.

Case two is a 45 year old female with a travel history to New York who presented at our health facility on March 24.

Case three is a 47 female with recent travel history to Barbados and Dominica. She presented at the health facility on March 27.

Case four is a 36 male who had travel history to Barbados and presented to our health facility on March 27.

Case five is a 74 year old female with no travel history or known contact with an individual with travel history. She presented at our facility on March 27.

Given case five has no travel history or known contact with anyone with travel history, this confirmed case points to the existence of local transmission of COVID-19. Aggressive tracing

of the contacts of these cases is currently underway by health teams dispatched to the communities of interest. The Department of Health has observed that all of these five cases were captured through our community respiratory clinics. This highlights the usefulness and effectiveness of these clinics to capture and streamline COVID-19 cases to care in a timely manner.

As of the week of Monday, March 23, Saint Lucia commenced national testing for COVID-19, which reduces our reliance on the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) for testing. Achieving this national capacity has allowed for the review and adapting of our national testing protocol to widen the number of persons being tested as well as to shorten the period of time within which results are received. To date, a total of 139 COVID-19 tests have been conducted; 71 were conducted by CARPHA and 62 conducted in Saint Lucia since the commencement of testing this week. All tests for COVID-19 and related treatment and care services are free to the individual.

Saint Lucia, like other countries globally, anticipates interruptions in regular shipment of testing supplies. In periods where this shortfall in supplies may occur, arrangements have been put in place to utilize the Caribbean Public Health Agency for testing of our COVID-19 samples.

Given the Ministry of Health's focus on positioning Saint Lucia to respond to COVID-19 cases, the national health care system has been adapted to allow for a more robust response to COVID-19. As such new pathways to care have been created and the public is asked to utilize these as required to access care. The 311 hotline is available to provide general information on COVID-19 and access points for care and support. As of Monday, March 30 this service shall be available for seven days a week and shall function from 7 a.m. to midnight daily. Mobile phones have been distributed among local medical physicians to allow for the delivery of telephone triaging of persons who are experiencing flu like symptoms and require an initial level of assessment and direction to points of care. The numbers of these physicians shall be communicated through the various media houses and through official social media platforms of the Ministry of Health and the Government of Saint Lucia.

Persons with flu-like symptoms can access care at their closest respiratory clinics. The five existing respiratory clinics are at the Gros-Islet Polyclinic, La Clery Wellness Centres, Dennery Hospital, Vieux-Fort Wellness Centre and the Soufriere Hospital. The services at Dennery and Soufriere

Hospitals and the La Clery and Vieux-Fort Wellness Centres are available daily Monday to Friday from 8 am to 4 pm. Gros-Islet Polyclinic is available daily from 8 am to 4 pm daily including weekends.

Respiratory clinic services are available at the Victoria and St Jude Hospitals and this is to be utilized by persons with respiratory issues and but requiring care outside the normal hours of operations at the clinics within the community. All respiratory cases coming into the hospital facilities will be screened and redirected for care services as required.

On Friday, March 27 Saint Lucia received a contingent of 113 Cuban medical professionals to strengthen our national capacity to provide care during the COVID-19 response. These professionals are currently undergoing a 14 day quarantine period prior to commencement of duties. The support of the Cuban health professionals shall prove beneficial in enhancing our capacity in managing the response to COVID-19.

In the interim, the public is asked to continue adhering to recommended measures for infection prevention and control which includes:

- regular hand washing with soap and water or alcohol based hand sanitizer where soap and water is not available.
- cover mouth and nose with disposable tissues or clothing when coughing and sneezing.
- avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing.
- seek medical attention and share your travel history with your health care provider if you have symptoms suggestive of respiratory illness either during or after travel.

Further updates to Saint Lucia's response to COVID-19 shall be issued by the Department of Health during the course of this week.

For more information please contact the Office of the Chief Medical Officer or the Epidemiology Unit, at 468-5309/468-5317 respectively