



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

## Ministry of Health

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS UNIT

Ground Floor Park Plaza, St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain

### M E D I A   R E L E A S E

March 21, 2020

#### **Trinidad and Tobago COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Update # 39** **All 68 Returning Nationals Tested**

**Port-of-Spain, March 21, 2020:** The Ministry of Health advises that the decision was made to perform COVID-19 tests on all of the sixty-eight (68) nationals who recently returned from a cruise, as they were deemed to be in an extremely high risk category based on factors such as age, pre-existing conditions and exposure to other COVID-19 positive passengers.

Out of this group of 68 persons, 40 tested positive for COVID-19 and 28 tested negative. The public is reassured that there is no risk of community spread as persons were transferred directly from the cruise ship to the aircraft and then transported directly from the airport to the remote quarantine facility. This was done with **strict adherence to infection control protocols**.

All persons who tested positive for COVID-19 were transferred to the Couva Hospital and Multi-Training Facility, which is the designated COVID-19 tertiary level facility. These patients were moved to this facility to ensure that tertiary level healthcare would be immediately accessible if their symptoms worsened.

Those who tested negative for COVID-19 remain at the original remote quarantine facility where they are being constantly monitored. The Ministry will continue to follow the existing protocols for those persons.

Thus, as of the afternoon of **Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2020** the Ministry reports the following:

- **Number of samples submitted to the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) for testing for COVID-19 = 278**
- **Number of samples which have tested positive = 49**

It should be noted that 40 of these positive cases came from the group of nationals who recently returned from the cruise. **The fact remains that all positive COVID-19 cases, thus far, have been imported.**



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Members of the public are reminded that recommended personal protective measures against COVID-19 should be followed.

The public is also urged to take the following personal hygiene measures to protect themselves and their loved ones from COVID-19:

- Wash your hands properly with soap and water
  - Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if water and soap are not available
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze
  - Dispose of tissue immediately after using
  - Cough and sneeze into the crook of your elbow if you do not have a tissue
- Avoid touching your face
- Sanitize hard surfaces (e.g. table tops, handrails, doorknobs and trolleys) as often as possible.
- Avoid close contact with people who have flu-like symptoms
- Stay home if you are ill

It is also advised that all public transportation vehicles should operate with windows open and, where possible, limit their occupancy.

The Ministry will continue to provide accurate information to the public in a timely fashion. The public is therefore urged to disregard and avoid sharing all unconfirmed, misleading and/or false information about COVID-19 (formerly Novel Coronavirus).

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