



Dr. Pearl McMillan

Chief Medical Officer

COVID-19 Update Press Conference

The Ministry of Health

Friday, 24th July 2020

Good afternoon Bahamas,

Here is the latest update on COVID-19 in The Bahamas.

The total number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 is 316.

Of that number,

- 124 are in New Providence,
- 155 in Grand Bahama,
- 21 in Bimini,
- 6 in the Berry Islands,
- 4 in Cat Cay,
- 2 in Cat Island,
- 3 in Moore's Island and
- 1 in Great Guana Cay

There are 42 new confirmed COVID-19 cases today. Deaths remain at 11. Hospitalized cases are at 11.

A total of 3,907 tests have been completed.

Grand Bahama has become the hotspot or epicenter for COVID-19 in The Bahamas. After having no new cases for some 64 days, Grand Bahama has now exceeded New Providence in the number of confirmed cases.

From the end of May 2020 to the first week in July 2020, less than four new cases were reported, clearly indicating that community transmission had been suppressed, and reliably demonstrating that, collectively, we had ridden out the first wave of COVID-19.

[Graph of New COVID-19 Cases per Epi Week]

In the first wave, The Bahamas recorded a total of 108 cases. These cases occurred across four islands – New Providence, Grand Bahama, Bimini and Cat Cay.

July 8th, 2020 marked the beginning of our 2nd wave and in just the last three weeks,

- New Providence has seen a 45% increase in cases, from 82 to 119
- Grand Bahama has seen a 119% increase in cases, from 10 to 120
- Bimini, including Cat Cay, has seen a 50% increase in cases, from 14 to 21

In just three weeks, COVID-19 has been introduced into virgin communities such as Cat Island, the Berry Islands, Moore's Island and Great Guana Cay.

During the first wave of the COVID-19 outbreak, the number of new cases doubled every week for the first two weeks.

By the third doubling, we were up to 20 cases per week, but this did not occur until the seventh week of the outbreak. The number of new cases steadily decreased after the seventh week

of the first wave, ultimately reaching zero new cases during the 16th week.

In comparison, during the 2nd second wave the number of new cases tripled every week for the first three weeks. The number of new cases in the third week is expected to increase as there remains two reporting days in this third week of the second wave.

[Hill Projection Curve for Grand Bahama]

The Hill projection curves for both New Providence and Grand Bahama show no evidence that the outbreak is being constrained in the short-term.

The fit of the Hill curve suggests that by tomorrow, July 25 2020 New Providence could have a total of 50 new cases.

The cumulative number of cases in Grand Bahama is projected to exceed 140 cases if it remains unrestrained. The growth of the outbreak in Grand Bahama is concerning and requires a concerted and coordinated action to contain.

[Graph of Active Cases By Epi Week]

Even at this point, it is recognized that the characteristics of this second wave are different. It is more widespread. It is affecting more persons under the age of 40 years. It shows a much faster initial growth (or steeper curve).

Early growth rates can be a predictor of the subsequent epidemic size.

This becomes significant in charting the way forward. The total number of new cases reported in a single day during the peak of the first wave was 6 cases on 1st April. This contrasts

with the second wave. Just yesterday alone (23rd July 2020), 55 new cases were reported in a single day. This wave is different and warrants action.

[Hospitalizations]

Health capacity for responding to COVID-19 takes into account many factors.

The health workforce is one factor. Our health workforce continues to be the gatekeepers for our health delivery and the public health fight against COVID-19.

Our response would be challenged without them. To them I say, you are valued!

Another factor is health system capacity. In New Providence there is a total of 30 COVID-19 beds. In Grand Bahama, there are 16 of these beds. At present, there are 11

hospitalized COVID-19 patients and Grand Bahama is fast approaching its bed capacity.

Of note, during the first wave, the largest number of hospitalized patients at any given point in time was 9 patients (2nd May 2020).

National outlets for real time PCR COVID-19 testing have expanded with the introduction of at least three (3) private sector players with this testing capacity.

We are pleased to report that the RNA extractor has arrived in country. This equipment reduces the processing time of samples and consequently the time for confirming whether a sample is positive or not.

In response to the increasing demand for testing, the National Reference Laboratory has identified qualified and

credentialed lab volunteers to support the extended hours of operation.

In country there are more 12,000 swabs in the public sector.

[Pie Chart of Active Cases by Island]

The Situation in Berry Island

The Situation in Cat Island

The Situation in Guana Cay (Baker's Bay)

The Situation in Moore's Island

New Providence

Grand Bahama

As we look at our current reality, it is important to be mindful of

:

1. The epidemiologic situation in the USA

2. Travel to and from international COVID-19 hotspots
3. The inter-island or domestic movements throughout the archipelago
4. Non-compliance locally with the published public health measures

The gravity of the day is unmistakable, and the stakes are high. A single new case of COVID-19 is too much.

We've heard that one bad apple spoils the bunch. If one of us does that follow the public health measures, then all of us feel the consequences.

And, we can't just follow the measures when we are in a surge. It must become habit – like brushing our teeth.

Every single time we step outside or are about in the community we must wear our masks. Every single time we must remind ourselves that life – your life, your family's life – is

more valuable than a night out with the boys, a party or hanging on the blocks.

Every single day, and many times a day, we wash our hands for at least 20 seconds. Difficult, No. Lifesaving, Yes!

Until there is herd immunity or a vaccine, COVID-19 will continue to linger with us, requiring changes to our customary norms. But we must not grow weary in well doing.

Thank you.