



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 18, 2020

#### **Trinidad and Tobago COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Update # 33**

**Port-of-Spain, March 18, 2020:** As part of the national drive to safeguard the health of the Trinidad and Tobago population in the face of the global COVID-19 outbreak, the Ministry of Health continues to provide up-to-date information on the country's status in this regard.

As of the afternoon of **Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2020** the Ministry reports the following:

- **Number of samples submitted to the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) for testing for COVID-19 = 137**
- **Number of samples which have tested positive = 7**

The public is also advised that the **Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) has the only lab that is certified to test samples for COVID-19** and therefore, it is the only lab that can confirm positive or negative results of the samples.

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).

As part of the proactive approach to protecting the Trinidad and Tobago population from the threat of COVID-19, the Ministry of Health has taken the official decision to institute two parallel health care systems.

One public health system will focus on addressing confirmed cases of COVID-19. The Caura Hospital and the Couva Hospital and Multi-Training Facility will be used for this purpose. The public is therefore encouraged to access the standard public health care services via the other existing health facilities, as usual.

Additionally, Public Health Inspectors will visit various public locations within communities where large gatherings are common (e.g. schools, supermarkets and malls) to advise key representatives on the necessary health care precautions.



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**Members of the public are also asked 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**
- **Practice social distancing (e.g. no kissing, hugging or hand-shaking, avoid mass gatherings)**
- **Sanitize hard surfaces (e.g. tabletops, handrails, doorknobs and trolleys) as often as possible**
- **Avoid close contact with people who have flu-like symptoms**
- **Stay home if you are ill**

If you are experiencing flu like symptoms and have recently traveled outside of Trinidad and Tobago, or have come into close contact with someone who has travelled internationally, please self-quarantine and call your nearest public health facility.

The Ministry of Health remains committed to delivering quality health care and providing up-to-date and accurate information to the Trinidad and Tobago population.

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