GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

STATEMENT

Tel: (284)468-2730
Official Government Website:
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STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE VINCENT O. WHEATLEY MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN OBSERVANCE OF VACCINATION WEEK IN THE AMERICAS 2026

Release Date: 30 April, 2026



As we continue to observe **Vaccination Week in the Americas 2026**, under the theme **“Your decision makes a difference, immunization for all,”** I take this opportunity to reflect on the work taking place across our Territory and the progress we have made together.

This week is not symbolic, it is active, it is visible, and it is reaching our people where they are. Across The Virgin Islands, our public health teams have been engaged in church services, school-based immunization sessions, outreach to the elderly and homebound, and community education initiatives. From Virgin Gorda to Jost Van Dyke, from Road Town to East End, vaccination and education efforts are taking place daily, demonstrating our commitment to equitable access and strong public health protection. This is what immunization for all looks like in practice.

This year, we also have strong reason to reflect with pride on the progress of The Virgin Islands in vaccination, particularly in our Human Papillomavirus, HPV,

vaccination programme. The Territory has achieved over 90 percent HPV vaccination coverage for two consecutive years, a significant public health milestone that places The Virgin Islands among the leading performers in the region. This achievement reflects deliberate policy, effective programme delivery, and the trust of our people.

I am especially pleased to note that the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) has recognised the British Virgin Islands as a best practice example in the Americas, highlighting our HPV vaccination programme as a model for other countries.

HPV vaccination is cancer prevention. It protects our young people, particularly our girls, from cervical cancer and other HPV related diseases. It is one of the most important long-term investments we can make in the health and wellbeing of our population. This success is the result of the dedication of our healthcare workers, our nurses, our school health teams, and the parents and young people who have made the decision to vaccinate.

However, even as we acknowledge this progress, we must remain focused. Vaccination is an ongoing commitment. There are still individuals who are not fully vaccinated, and there are opportunities to strengthen coverage across all age groups, particularly among adults and high-risk populations.

As Vaccination Week continues, I encourage all residents to review their vaccination status, ensure their children are up to date, and take advantage of the outreach and clinic services currently being provided across the Territory. Every decision to vaccinate strengthens the protection of our families, our communities, and our health system.

I also take this opportunity to commend our healthcare workers and public health teams for their continued dedication and professionalism. Your work is making a real and lasting difference in the lives of our people.

In closing, the message remains clear. Your decision makes a difference, and here in The Virgin Islands, we are demonstrating that difference through action, leadership, and results.

I encourage the public to view the video produced by PAHO showcasing the British Virgin Islands' HPV vaccination programme as a best practice example in the Americas, and to take pride in what we have achieved together.

Let us continue working together to ensure immunization for all.

Thank you.

For Additional Information Contact:

Natasha Lettsome-Humphrey
Public Health Communications Specialist
Ministry of Health and Social Development
Telephone: 468-2286

Email: nlettsome@gov.vg