

Vaccinations are Still The Bahamas' Best Bet to End the Pandemic

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We are enjoying a gradual reduction of Covid-19 restrictions in The Bahamas. That is a good thing to be celebrated. We should remember that Covid-19 is still present and new variants are still developing and spreading around the globe. The impact of the virus lingers across our country. Some have lost loved ones. Many of us have friends or family who are still feeling long-term effects of the coronavirus.

Vaccination against Covid-19 remains an important tool. Around the world, 21.3 million vaccine doses are administered daily. Now that more than 11.7 billion doses have been given, we have data that confirms them to be safe and effective, The Bahamas' vaccination rate hovers at approximately 50 percent despite their ease of availability. Choosing not to take the Covid-19 vaccination is choosing to willingly gamble with your health, especially if you have a pre-existing condition like diabetes or high blood pressure.

Experience has shown that combating the impact of the coronavirus is predicated on action - particularly positive actions that promote getting vaccinated. *Now Is The Time*, a campaign recently launched by Templeton Religion Trust, prompts that action - encouraging Bahamians and residents to get vaccinated.

The campaign shares the stories of real people who talk about why they decided to take the vaccine. Everybody must find their own reason to be vaccinated, whether it is to protect their own health or that of their family or loved ones. Medical professionals have been sharing facts about the vaccines. People can choose to believe them or not. However, in a small society like ours, hearing someone you know talk about their fears about getting the virus while they were unvaccinated - is very powerful. For others, hearing the stories of the stress that it caused the families of Covid-19 patients is even more meaningful. We can all relate to that!

Perhaps we have been through the worst of the coronavirus pandemic; if true, that is indeed something we should celebrate. Realistically, worldwide data suggests that we are not yet out of the woods. I believe that the *Now is the Time* campaign is necessary to remind us that we still need to take positive action to protect our health. We all want to return to the freedoms that we enjoyed before the onset of this once-in-a-lifetime virus.

It is my hope that we will continue to encourage each other to obey the health protocols and get vaccinated.