



**DATE:** March 1, 2024

**TO:** State Board of Health Members

**FROM:** Fermin Leguen, MD, MPH, District Health Officer

**SUBJECT:** District Health Officer Report

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### Overdose and Substance Use Update

Between 2020 and 2023 the Southern Nevada Health District reported the number of overdose deaths among Clark County residents involving the concurrent use of fentanyl with methamphetamine or cocaine increased 97%, rising from 73 deaths to 144 deaths, respectively. For people who do not use opioids regularly, using stimulants that are adulterated with fentanyl places them at a higher risk of overdose.

Nationally, drug overdose death rates involving fentanyl increased by 279% from 2016 to 2021. Approximately 108,000 people died between August 2021 and August 2022 from drug poisonings, and nearly 70% of those deaths involved synthetic opioids like fentanyl. The rate of overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids in 2021 was nearly 22 times the rate in 2013.

Based on this data, in January the Health District urged heightened public awareness of the health dangers related to the mixture of stimulants with highly potent synthetic opioids like fentanyl.

Fentanyl, a substance that is up to 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine, poses a significant threat. Fentanyl test strips allow people to test drugs for traces of fentanyl, which can be deadly even in small amounts. The Health District provides test strips without a prescription at 280 S. Decatur Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89107, or at a distribution location which can be found at <https://nvopioidresponse.org/harm-reduction/fts/fts-finder/>.

Naloxone (Narcan) is a life-saving medication that can reverse an overdose from opioids, including heroin and fentanyl, when given in time. Naloxone should be given in response to any suspected overdose as a means of reversing any possible opioid effects. It's also important to call 911 for additional medical treatment. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides information on responding to an opioid overdose at [How to Respond to an Opioid Overdose | HHS.gov](https://www.hhs.gov/health-topics/overdose-reversal-2021).

Nasal naloxone is available at no cost to the public at the Health District's pharmacy at 280 S. Decatur Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89107. Injectable naloxone can be obtained free of charge at the Trac-B/Impact Exchange Harm Reduction Program's storefront and at the seven public health vending machines operated in Clark County. The locations of these machines are available at [Impact Exchange Vending Machines – Harm Reduction Center Las Vegas \(harmreductioncenterlv.com\)](https://www.impactexchange.org/). The statewide naloxone medication finder is available at <https://nvopioidresponse.org/harm-reduction/overdose-reversal-medication/finder/>.

To learn more about fentanyl, visit the CDC website at [Fentanyl | Opioids | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/od/oc/opioids/). People who are using substances, or their loved ones, can obtain information about crisis support and resources by calling the 988 Suicide and Crisis Hotline or by visiting <https://behavioralhealthnv.org/>.

### **Tuberculosis Investigation Update**

In December, the Southern Nevada Health District announced it was conducting a multi-site tuberculosis investigation in coordination with the Clark County School District. The investigation involves a person who had undiagnosed active TB disease and was at multiple school district campuses. Based on the Health District's investigation, the patient had minimal close contact with people at most of the campuses where they were present. However, students and staff at Ruthe Deskin Elementary School were identified as having potential TB exposure. Notifications were conducted for all individuals identified as close contacts of the patient and screening and testing clinics were held.

To date, more than 550 students and staff members have been tested for TB infection. No additional active cases of TB infection have been reported. If an individual receives a positive screening test, they undergo further clinical evaluation to determine if they have latent tuberculosis.

The Health District continues to emphasize that not everyone who may have been exposed will be infected and not everyone who is infected with TB has active disease. People who have latent TB infection have no signs or symptoms of the disease. They are not sick and cannot spread the disease to others.

The Southern Nevada Health District remains committed to conducting immediate and thorough investigations of all known active TB cases as they are reported, with the goal of identifying individuals at risk of exposure. The Health District offers treatment for those people who are exposed and found to have a TB infection to prevent the development of active TB disease and avoid future exposures to TB cases in the community.

More information about TB is available on the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov/tb/default.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/tb/default.htm). People who received notifications and have additional questions about the Health District investigation can call its Information Line at (702) 759-INFO (4636) or (866) 767-5038, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

### **Influenza Season**

Influenza surveillance in Clark County includes data collected from local acute care hospitals and other health care providers. In Clark County, as of January 27, 2024, there have been 827 influenza-associated hospitalizations and 55 deaths reported. The percentage of emergency department visits and urgent care clinic visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) decreased from 6.6% in week 3 to 5.7% in week 4. Influenza A has been the dominant type circulating. Of the patients reported through the U.S. Outpatient Influenza-like Illness Surveillance Network (ILINet), 4.3% were due to respiratory illness that included ILI. This percentage was above the national baseline of 2.9%. Among 55 states and jurisdictions, the respiratory illness activity level in the state of Nevada is moderate.

In keeping with CDC guidelines, the Health District strongly recommends everyone 6 months of age and older get the vaccine. It is especially important for those at higher risk of developing serious complications from the flu, including people 65 years of age and older, as well as those with underlying medical conditions. It is also important to protect people more likely to be exposed to both flu and COVID-19, including health care workers.

Flu surveillance in Clark County for the 2023–2024 influenza season begins October 1 and runs through May 18. The weekly Influenza Surveillance Snapshot and Influenza Report by Age Group is available on SNHD’s website.

### **Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day**

National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day was observed on February 7, and the Health District joined with community partners to provide additional health services to the community. National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day highlights efforts to reduce HIV as well as other sexually transmitted infections and address HIV stigma in Black/African American communities.

Activities, presented by the Southern Nevada Healthcare Consortium, took place at Mario’s Westside Market, 1425 W. Lake Mead Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89106. The AIDS Healthcare Foundation offered free HIV testing, while the Health District provided syphilis testing, safe sex kits and education about pre- and post-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP, PEP). Additionally, the Health District provided blood pressure screenings, smoking/vaping cessation information and vaccinations for mpox, COVID-19 and flu. The event also included food, a vendor health fair and free entertainment.

Free HIV testing was also available at additional Health District locations:

- Southern Nevada Health District Main Public Health Center, 280 S. Decatur Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89107, Monday – Thursday, 8 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. (closed noon – 1 p.m.)
- All Saints Sexual Health Clinic, 4201 W. Washington Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89107, Monday – Thursday, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. (closed noon – 1 p.m.)

Free HIV testing was offered at the Fremont Public Health Center, 2830 E. Fremont St., Las Vegas, NV 89104 on February 7 from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., and is available at this location every Tuesday from 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.

In addition, free at-home HIV test kits are available through the Health District’s [Collect2Protect](#) program.

The Health District and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend all people between the ages of 13 and 64 get tested for HIV at least once. People who have continued risk of HIV infection should consider getting an HIV test at least once every year and as frequently as every three months for those at higher risk. Early diagnosis is critical for people with HIV so that they can benefit from antiretroviral therapy (ART). ART decreases HIV-related illnesses, reduces HIV levels in the bloodstream, and lowers the risk of transmitting HIV to intimate partners. With ART, HIV-positive people can remain healthy for many years.

Black/African American people accounted for 40% of the nation’s 34,800 new HIV diagnoses in 2019 but made up only 13% of the U.S. population. Approximately 13% of Black people with HIV in the U.S. still do not know their status, and few are receiving adequate HIV care and treatment. In addition, PrEP use is lowest and least prescribed among Black people as compared to white, Hispanic and Latino people. Issues such as racism, discrimination, and medical distrust prevent many Black people from accessing HIV testing, prevention and treatment.

For more information on National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, visit [National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day | Awareness Days | Resource Library | HIV/AIDS | CDC](#).

## **American Heart Month**

February is American Heart Month, and the Health District and community partners offered free programs and classes that aim to help people reduce their risk factors for heart disease.

The Health District encouraged people to take steps to assess their heart health such as knowing their blood pressure numbers throughout the month, emphasizing heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, but knowing their numbers and taking small steps to incorporate healthier habits into their daily lives are important to prevent cardiovascular disease.

The following heart healthy classes and resources were available to the public throughout the month:

### **Free Self-Monitoring Blood Pressure Program**

Keeping blood pressure in check is essential for people with hypertension and lowers the risk for stroke or heart disease. Offered in partnership with YMCA of Southern Nevada, the Healthy Hearts Ambassador Program provides personalized support to help people with hypertension develop a blood pressure self-monitoring routine. The program also offers nutrition education and tips to maintain cardiovascular health. Classes are free and begin February 26, at the Durango YMCA, 3521 N. Durango Dr., Las Vegas 89129. The program is available in English and Spanish. For more information, or to register, call (702) 832-4901 or email [lacosta@lasvegasyymca.org](mailto:lacosta@lasvegasyymca.org) or [jjimenez@lasvegasyymca.org](mailto:jjimenez@lasvegasyymca.org).

### **Blood Pressure Screening Events**

Free blood pressure checks, administered by the Health District, were available at the following locations:

- **Friday, February 2:**

The Beautiful Studio, 1 – 3 p.m., at the Go Red for Women Event, 3950 N. Tenaya Way, # 120, Las Vegas, NV 89129

- **Saturday, February 3:**

Executive Cuts, 10 a.m.-noon, 921 W. Owens Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89106

- **Friday, February 16:**

Master Barbering Galo, 3 – 5 p.m., 8090 Blue Diamond Rd., Las Vegas, NV 89178

- **Friday, February 23:**

Fade'em All Barbershop, 3 – 5 p.m., 7760 W. Sahara Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89117

- **Saturday, February 24:**

Blade Masters Barbershop, 10 a.m. – noon, 2245 N. Decatur Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89108

For dates and locations of future blood pressure screenings, visit [Community Calendar – Get Healthy Clark County](#).

Additionally, the Health District partners with the Barbershop Health Outreach Project to provide permanent, self-administered blood pressure monitoring stations at the following businesses:

- Executive Cuts, 921 W. Owens Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89106
- Blade Masters Barbershop, 2245 N. Decatur Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89108

Customers and non-customers alike can stop by these locations and get a free blood pressure check as well as educational materials. Hours are 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.

### **Heart Health Trivia Contest**

The Health District sponsored a heart health trivia contest during February. People were invited to follow Get Healthy Clark County on social media and enter the contest for a chance to win a Target gift card.

To learn more about heart attack and stroke, visit <https://gethealthyclarkcounty.org/manage-your-risk/heart-disease/#million-hearts>.

### **World AIDS Day**

The Health District joined with community partners in observing World AIDS Day on Friday, December 1, a day of solidarity for those affected by HIV. More than 32 million people have died worldwide from AIDS-related illness. In Clark County, more than 11,000 people are living with HIV and 488 were newly diagnosed in 2022.

On World AIDS Day, the Health District offered free, rapid HIV testing at its Fremont Public Health Center, 2380 E. Fremont St., Las Vegas, NV 89104, and information about pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). Express Testing is also regularly available Monday – Thursday from 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (closed noon – 1 p.m.) at the Health District’s Southern Nevada Community Health Center Sexual Health Clinic, 280 S. Decatur Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89107. Testing at this location is for those who are asymptomatic and would like to know their HIV status.

The Health District also offers rapid HIV testing options including home HIV test kits. The [Collect2Protect](#) program allows users to conveniently and privately order an at-home HIV test kit at no cost and get their results at home. Test kits for chlamydia and gonorrhea are also available for a fee.

Area residents were also invited to collectively create a community AIDS quilt on December 1 from at The Center, 401 S. Maryland Parkway, Las Vegas, 89101. This event featured music, food and free HIV testing. Also on the 1<sup>st</sup>, the AIDS Healthcare Foundation provided free HIV testing at Entourage Spa & Health Club, 953 E. Sahara Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89104, and a reception was held at Community Counseling Center, 714 E. Sahara Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89104.

Partner activities and observances included:

#### **Thursday, November 30**

- Free rapid testing at the Southern Nevada Community Health Center Sexual Health Clinic, 280 S. Decatur Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89107.
- Aid for AIDS of Nevada (AFAN) “Turning the Sign Red” event at the Welcome to Las Vegas sign.

#### **Saturday, December 2**

- People wearing red shirts formrf a “human AIDS ribbon” on the south side of the Commercial Center, 900 E. Liberace Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89109.

#### **Sunday, December 3**

- The 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Ribbon of Life Holiday Spectacular held at the Tropicana Las Vegas, 3801 Las Vegas Blvd. S., Las Vegas, NV 89109. Sponsored by Golden Rainbow, this event supports people who are impacted by HIV/AIDS by providing emergency assistance, education, financial aid and affordable housing in a safe and inclusive environment.

More information on World AIDS Day is available on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [World AIDS Day | CDC](#).