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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Health district identifies increase in gastrointestinal illnesses

LAS VEGAS - January 9, 2007- The Southern Nevada Health District's Office of Epidemiology has identified an increase in gastrointestinal illness throughout the community. The illnesses are not connected to any particular restaurant, facility or food, but are affecting people throughout the Las Vegas Valley. Community-wide increases of gastroenteritis are common in the winter months and outbreaks of similar illnesses have recently been reported throughout the country.

This type of gastroenteritis is most often caused by viruses and is not considered serious. Although people might feel very sick and vomit several times in a day, the illness usually is resolved in 36 to 48 hours without any long-term health affects. While antibiotics are ineffective against viruses, sufferers should drink plenty of liquids to replace fluids lost due to vomiting and diarrhea to avoid dehydration. This is especially important for children and the elderly. Severe dehydration is usually seen only among the very young, the elderly and those with weakened immune systems.

Viral gastrointestinal illnesses are very contagious and can spread easily from person-to-person by:

- Eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated liquids
- Touching contaminated surfaces and then touching your mouth
- Being in direct contact with another person who is infected

Infected people are contagious from the time they begin to feel ill until at least three days after recovery. People who exhibit symptoms of gastrointestinal illness should avoid close contact with others, and refrain from attending school and work. In addition, they and their family members and household contact should carry out good hand washing and hygiene practices. Contaminated surfaces should be disinfected immediately with household chlorine bleach-based cleaners and any soiled articles of clothing or linens should be washed promptly. Contaminated food or water should be avoided.

If there is a high fever, blood in the stools or if you are vomiting blood, or if symptoms last more than three days, contact a physician. For more information about gastrointestinal illnesses, visit the Southern Nevada Health District's website, www.southernnevadahealthdistrict.org or call the Office of Epidemiology at (702) 759-1300