



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### World TB Day, March 24

**LAS VEGAS** – This Sunday, March 24, is World TB Day, the date in 1882 when Dr. Robert Koch announced he identified *M. tuberculosis*, the bacteria responsible for one of the world's most dreaded diseases. Today, tuberculosis affects approximately two billion people worldwide. In 2012, there were 70 cases in Clark County and a total of 85 reported throughout the state.

Nationwide, there were 9,951 cases of TB in 2012. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the 2011 TB rate in the United States was 3.2 cases per 100,000 people. Although TB can affect anyone, the majority of cases nationwide and in Nevada are among the foreign born in whose home countries latent TB infection rates are high. In Clark County, 76 percent of patients were foreign born. In 2012, 16 percent of TB patients were children under the age of 18. However, as many as one in 10 people no matter their country of birth would test positive for exposure to the bacterium, although they may not have been sick or infectious.

Some TB stats include:

- Approximately one in three people worldwide have latent TB infection
- In 2011, nearly 9 million people became sick with TB disease
- In 2011, there were approximately 1.4 million TB-related deaths worldwide
- TB is a leading cause of death for people with HIV

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has personal stories from real TB patients on its website: <http://www.cdc.gov/tb/topic/basics/personalstories.htm>. These patients come from various communities throughout the United States.

World TB Day is an opportunity to remember that TB, while highly curable, is not eradicated. This year's theme is Stop TB In My Lifetime, which encourages people worldwide to work with policy makers to eliminate the disease. The Southern Nevada Health District works with federal health officials, state health division representatives, local agencies, and national advocacy groups to identify active cases for treatment as well as their close contacts for preventive care, and provide education and expert consultation on infection control practices, screening procedures, and case reporting.

It is also an opportunity to educate the community about an important component of public health and encourage health care providers to consider tuberculosis when they treat symptomatic patients. This critical diagnosis helps to get patients into treatment quickly and limit the spread to the patient's contacts.

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World TB Day, March 24 – add one

The Southern Nevada Health District's active contact investigation programs and its community partnerships have been instrumental in avoiding a sudden surge in newly reported cases, allowing the rate of active cases to remain steady over time. Nevada consistently ranks among the top 20 states with the highest rates of TB. Nevada reports an average of 85 active cases of TB disease each year.

The Southern Nevada Health District's TB Treatment and Control Clinic conducted 128 contact investigations in 2012. At any given time, there are approximately 80 people undergoing treatment for active TB in Clark County under the supervision of the health district. Adherence to treatment is key to eliminating the risk of spreading TB to a patient's close contacts and the community as a whole. In recent years, drug resistant strains of TB have developed, limiting treatment options with several cases of drug resistant cases identified locally. "Directly observed" therapy protocols require the TB Treatment and Control Clinic to utilize a number of resources to monitor patient compliance with therapy. Health district clinicians coordinate care for patients, many of whom voluntarily remain in quarantine until adherence to an effective treatment plan renders them no longer infectious. Treatment can take six to 24 months and requires supervision, which is burdensome on the patient and health care systems.

Incomplete treatment has led to a surge in multiple drug-resistant TB strains around the world. In some locations, more than 20 percent of newly diagnosed TB cases are drug resistant. There have been no new classes of TB drugs developed since the 1960s.

People who test positive for TB and who are asymptomatic have 'latent' TB infection. They are not sick and are incapable of spreading the disease. It means that they have been exposed to the TB bacterium at some point in their lives. People with latent TB are offered treatment to prevent them from developing an active case of TB which could spread disease.

Additionally, the CDC reports that the "essential elements for controlling TB in the United States include sufficient resources, interventions targeted to populations at high risk for TB, and collaborative efforts with the international community to reduce the burden of TB globally."

Drug resistant TB infection and disease is an increasing public health threat locally, nationally, and globally. Patients can be on therapy to treat drug resistant TB for 18 to 24 months. TB can be a challenging disease to treat which requires strict compliance and the use of multiple medications to prevent resistance. TB can remain in the body dormant for years, it is important to treat individuals that may not exhibit signs and symptoms of active disease but still harbor the organism to prevent the progression of the infection and possibly death. TB awareness is important not only on World TB Day but every day so we can protect our community from this possibly deadly highly but curable disease.

Updated information about the Southern Nevada Health District can be found on Facebook [www.facebook.com/SouthernNevadaHealthDistrict](http://www.facebook.com/SouthernNevadaHealthDistrict), on YouTube [www.youtube.com/SNHealthDistrict](http://www.youtube.com/SNHealthDistrict) or Twitter: [www.twitter.com/SNHDInfo](http://www.twitter.com/SNHDInfo), Ez2stop: [www.twitter.com/ez2stop](http://www.twitter.com/ez2stop), or Get Healthy Clark County: [www.twitter.com/gethealthycc](http://www.twitter.com/gethealthycc). The health district is now available in Spanish on Twitter [www.twitter.com/TuSNHD](http://www.twitter.com/TuSNHD). Don't have a Twitter account? Follow the health district on your phone by texting "follow SNHDInfo" to 40404.