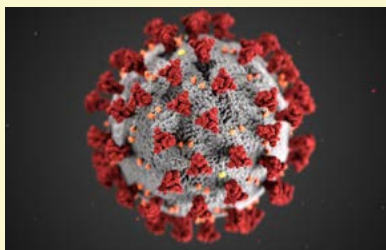


## IN THIS ISSUE



## VA Mission against COVID-19

• 2 •



## VASNHS Staff Sharpen Critical Care Skills

• 4 •



## Improvement Changes to VASNHS PTSD Program

• 6 •

## Construction Updates

## CC-215 and Pecos Closure/ VAMC East & West Main Entrances



The eastbound and westbound ramps at Pecos Road on the CC-215 Beltway will close April 6 for construction, which is anticipated to take approximately four months to complete. During this time, travelers to and from the North Las Vegas VA Medical Center on the CC-215 Beltway will need to use either Losee Road or Lamb Boulevard.

The medical center is currently screening all visitors at vehicle entrances and operating under the following schedule:

Pecos Main gate: 24/7

Southwest Gate: 6-9 a.m. and 3-5 p.m. (as an Exit only), Monday-Friday

Southeast Gate: 5:30 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday-Friday

With the ramp closures and gate screenings, visitors should plan extra time in their commute for any scheduled appointments.

The East/West Entrance project (Visitor information booths) at the VAMC have been suspended until further notice due to COVID-19.

For the latest updates on construction please visit our website:  
VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System: [www.lasvegas.va.gov](http://www.lasvegas.va.gov)



# COVID-19 Nutritional Measures

## Stay-At Home Tips - Manage Your Dietary Needs during COVID-19

As many of us have had to make changes to our daily routines in response to COVID-19, it's important that we keep in mind our Whole Health concept of self-care. We asked our VASNHS Dietitians about how to adapt our lifestyle without losing sight of healthy choices for diet and exercise.

**Q:** What new dietary challenges are arising because of COVID-19?

**A:** While there are some challenges, the basic dietary guidelines remain the same. A healthy diet is essential for good nutrition and to combat chronic noncommunicable diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer. A healthy diet consists of:

- Eating protein from a variety of sources. Foods in the meat, poultry, fish, eggs, nuts, and seed group provide nutrients that are vital for health and maintenance and body repair. Select a variety of protein foods to improve nutrient intake and health benefits, including at least 8 ounces of cooked seafood per week.
- Consuming lots of fruits and vegetables. They are great sources of vitamins, minerals, dietary fiber, plant protein and antioxidants. Individuals with diets rich in fruits and vegetables have a decreased risk of obesity, heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some types of cancer.
- Eat less fat. Fats and oils and concentrated sources of energy. Eating too much, particularly the wrong kinds of fat, like saturated and industrially produced trans-fat, can increase the risk of heart disease and stroke. Using unsaturated vegetable oils (olive, soy, sunflower or corn oil) rather than animal fats or oils high in saturated fats (butter, ghee, lard, coconut and palm oil) will help consume healthier fats.

To avoid unhealthy weight gain, consumption of total fat should not exceed 30% of a person's overall energy intake.

- Limit intake of sugars. For a healthy diet, sugars should represent less than 10% of your total energy intake. Reducing even further to under 5% has additional health benefits. Reduce salt intake. Keeping your salt intake low helps prevent hypertension and reduces the risk of heart disease and stroke in the adult population.

Consider canned or frozen foods when available from a smaller store, local market or convenience store. Eat perishable foods first! Cook perishable foods and freeze them for later use. If your diet must change to less healthy convenience foods, consider taking a multivitamin to supplement necessary

vitamins and minerals.

**Q:** Are there any options available to Veterans who are elderly or homebound to get groceries for pick-up or delivery?

**A:** Many local grocery stores are offering early opening times for elderly customers. Walmart and Target have delivery or curbside pick-up.

If affordable, consider restaurants that are offering pick-up or the delivery services. (Keep in mind the need to take proper hygiene precautions with contact of people and items of course.)

For those who need assistance finding food or a senior 60+ in need of home delivered groceries, call the

Three Square at 702-765-4030. A full list of Emergency Distribution Food Distribution Sites is available here:

[www.threesquare.org/help](http://www.threesquare.org/help)



**Q:** As grocery stores are quickly running out of canned goods and non-perishables, how would you recommend stocking up on goods to last for longer than a couple of days?

**A:** Cook and freeze your meals or can your foods. You can also purchase dried products like Beans, pasta, and cereals. For perishable items, things like boxed milk typically last longer than it's bottled counter part.

**Q:** What are some ways Veterans can maintain a healthy lifestyle while still staying home and avoiding unnecessary social contact

**A:** Stay active and engaged! You can take walks outside while still keeping distance from others. Walking in the home or using a home exercise device like a treadmill, bike, or elliptical can help you to keep healthy while staying home. There are some great home tutorials for free on Youtube for age and condition-appropriate activity. Yoga and other flexibility exercises can also help to build core strength and stability.

Don't forget your mental health! Make it a priority to stay connected with someone daily on the phone or computer. And remember, all of our VA Mental Health services are available through telehealth!



# Limiting The Spread of COVID-19

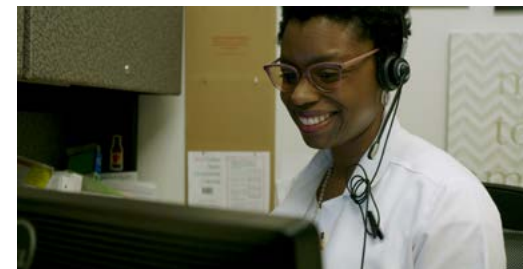
## VASNHS Offers Virtual Primary Care & Mental Health Services

In response to COVID-19, VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System (VASNHS) is making it easier and safer for Veterans to access services from home. As such, VASNHS is moving as many in-person primary care behavioral health appointments to virtual care as possible.

"Due to COVID-19 precautionary measures and out of concern for our Veterans, we are honoring current social isolation and distancing guidelines," said Dr. Maia D. Carter, VASNHS chief of Primary Care. "With virtual care, we are able to leverage available technology to make sure that our patients and staff are safe."

We want to be able to connect with our Veterans, educate them, particularly about COVID-19, and make sure we get them what they need during this period of time."

Virtual care allows Veterans to contact their VA health care team through secure messaging or to receive in-home treatment via telephone or video.



Dr. Maia D. Carter, VASNHS Chief of Primary Care conducting a "Virtual" appointment with a Veteran via VA Video Connect App

"This is a time where we can take major advantage of the technology," Carter said. "When I have patients who are new to virtual care, I work through the process with them. When we connect, I review a Veteran's medical record with them, discuss their concerns as well as review studies, test results, and medications to get them what they need."

Gradually, most Veterans become comfortable with the technology and many prefer virtual care."

One area that has greatly increased its use of virtual care is behavioral health. VASNHS is expanding its options to allow for all mental health services to be available virtually. "If you're in psychotherapy, or

you've been seeing your mental health provider for even a little while, you're ready to rock with it," said Tim Jobin,



Tim Jobin, VASNHS' Chief of Behavioral Health conducting a video conference check with mental health providers

VASNHS' chief of Behavioral Health. "If you have a smartphone, you're ready to go. If you have high-speed internet and a laptop, you're ready to go. I would say, in my opinion, 99 percent of people are in a good place to do this."

Last year, Veterans had over 20 million virtual engagements with VA. With increased concern regarding illnesses such as COVID-19, VASNHS is encouraging more Veterans to take advantage of virtual care. Options include Telehealth [telehealth.va.gov], MyHealtheVet Secure Messaging [myhealth.va.gov] and care in the home via VA Video Connect.

VASNHS is also encouraging Veterans who have not accessed care with the VA to enroll virtually at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov), or call the Health Eligibility Center at 877-222-8387.

If a Veteran is currently enrolled at another VA location and would like to transfer to the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System, they can call the **Enrollment office at 702-791-9071**. Due to COVID-19, in-person visits are suspended for the time being.



For more information about all the VA apps available for healthcare and mental health go to VA Mobile website: [www.mobile.va.gov](http://www.mobile.va.gov)

## DID YOU KNOW...

VA telehealth options are available to Veterans for majority of healthcare and mental health needs:



### VA Video Connect

Secure video visits with your VA care team from anywhere



### RX Refill

Request, refill and track VA prescriptions with ease



### VA Online Scheduling

Schedule, request and track VA appointments with ease!



### My HealtheVet

Secure Messaging, Schedule Appointments, View Medical Records



# Holding The Front Lines

## VASNHS Staff Sharpen Critical Care Skills in Response to COVID-19

As health care facilities around the nation deal with an influx of COVID-19 patients, VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System is ensuring its staff is ready. Following the temporary closure of many of its non-critical services, VASNHS is using the excess manpower to staff critical care areas within the North Las Vegas VA Medical Center. As such, VASNHS is currently providing refresher training to more than 80 nurses, intermediate care technicians, and medical equipment technicians who could potentially shift from their regularly-assigned duties to critical care positions in support of COVID-19 response operations.

“We understand the gravity of this situation, and are looking at models from other countries,” said Quentin Hart, clinical nurse educator and instructor for the critical care training program. “Our leadership is looking at those models and trying to learn from that [foresight] to better prepare us.” VASNHS Nursing Professional Services staff provided critical care training to the operating room (OR), post-anesthesia care unit (PACU), special procedures unit (SPU), interventional radiology (IR) and cardiac catheterization lab nurses as part of the COVID-19 surge plan. During a week-long course, staff honed their nursing skills such as safely drawing blood, performing electrocardiograms (EKGs), and giving respiratory treatments.

“Being a nurse means you have that basic training anyway,” Hart said. “We just try to facilitate refreshing of those skills. An OR nurse would not normally be doing lab draws, medications, or respiratory treatments. These are functions that are performed before or after surgery, so those things aren’t in their normal scope of practice.

We’re making sure they can document their actions, they understand where the orders are going to be coming from, and



VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System is conducting refresher skills training to prepare nurses, intermediate care technicians and medical equipment techs to work outside their regularly assigned areas and provide critical care in support of COVID-19 response operations. (VA Photo by John Archiquette)

we’re refreshing some of the physical skills that are required in the acute care setting.” For the nurses themselves, the specialized nature of their normal jobs means that the refresher course is a way to sharpen those general skills. “The training provided by Nursing Professional Services is a great foundation which allowed us to practice hands-on for procedures and processes that we don’t typically utilize in our departments,” said Kimberly Macasieb, operating room nurse participating in the course.

“Understanding what knowledge and skills we do have that can be applied to other areas and what we can do to help the critical care nurses is paramount. This training provided an overview of some tasks we may be able to do that will help ease the workload of the critical care nurses.” While this refresher training is specifically geared toward handling a potential COVID-19-related patient surge, VASNHS staff practice for these types of scenarios regularly. “Our leadership has us prepare for these types of scenarios with exercises like mass casualty drills,” said Hart. “We have an entire department set aside for emergency preparedness.

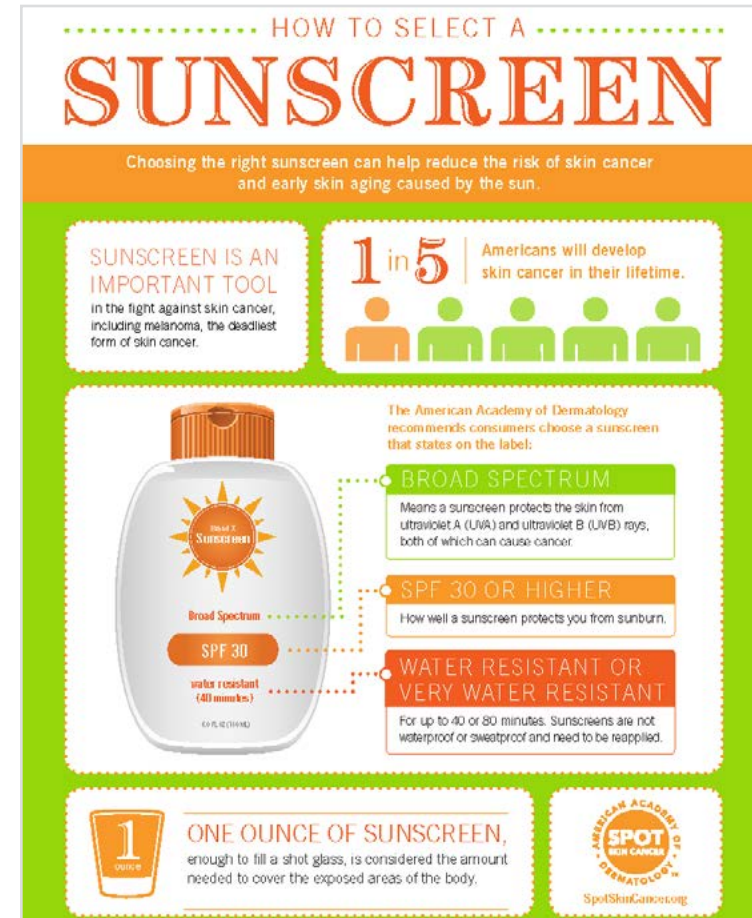
I don’t know if anyone in the private sector has prepared to the extent that we have. This is just giving us an opportunity to put [our training] into effect. COVID-19 is not unique in how we prepare for pandemics. This type of emergency is practiced routinely.” And the nurses participating in the course are taking to the challenge, knowing that they may have to put these lessons into action soon enough.

“I think it’s safe to say that everyone is nervous about the unknown,” said Macasieb. “It’s like waiting for a battle to start. We see what is happening in places like Italy and New York and it is scary... All we can do is prepare the best we can and see how we can help each other to provide the best care possible for our patients.”

“They understand the usefulness of trying to practice these skills before they are interacting with real patients,” Hart said. “We understand the gravity of this, and why it’s important for us to establish best practices in case we experience an influx of patients like we are seeing around the country.”

# Summer Safety Skin Care

## Understanding How Seasonal Changes Affect Skincare and Your Health



It's important to protect your skin year-round, especially in southern Nevada. But with warmer weather and longer days approaching, summer's the time to be extra vigilant about skin safety. Dr. Sarah Joeckel, a dermatologist at the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System, has some recommendations on how to protect yourself from the sun's harmful rays, and the most powerful tools for prevention of skin cancer.

### 1. Apply (and reapply) sunscreen.

Dr. Joeckel recommends using a broad-spectrum sunscreen that provides both UVA and UVB protection, with an SPF protection of 30 or above. This should be applied 30 minutes before going out. And no matter the SPF, always reapply every two hours. She says the biggest sunscreen mistakes people of all ages make are not putting enough on the first time, and not reapplying later. A good rule of thumb is to use about one ounce at a time to cover your entire body.

### 2. Wear Protective Clothing.

While our initial reaction to hot weather is normally to wear little clothing to beat the heat, Joeckel says that the best protection is to cover as much skin as possible. “Wear light-weight long sleeved shirts, pants, and closed shoes to protect yourself from UV rays.”

Another common misconception is about headgear.

“Baseball caps are not good,” Joeckel said. “Solid hats with a wide-brim that cover the scalp and ears are the way to go.”

Finally, make sure your sunglasses are rated for UV-Protection.

### 3. Know your risk factors.

While everyone should be conscious of skin protection, some people are more predisposed to skin concerns than others. “Those with fair complexions, red hair, or freckling are often at greater risk for skin damage,” Joeckel said. “Also those with certain pre-existing skin conditions like longstanding discoid lupus, erosive lichen planus, or lichen sclerosus.” If you are taking medications that can cause immunosuppression or routinely work with certain organic chemicals or radiation, you may also be at greater risk.

### 4. Things to remember.

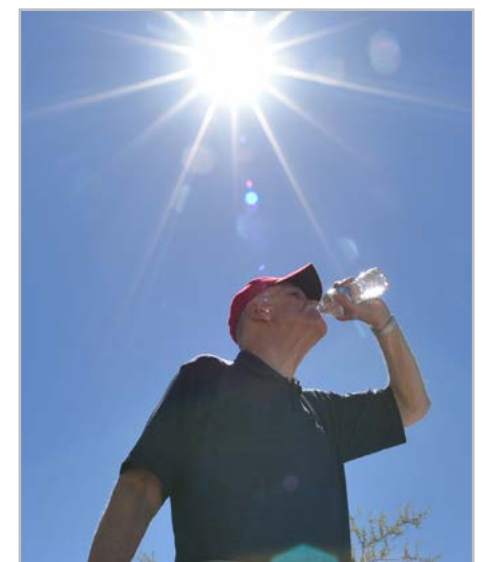
-Avoid tanning beds. These cause premature aging and skin cancers too.

-Avoid being outside between 10 a.m.-2 p.m. when UV exposure is at its highest.

-You can still sunburn on a cloudy day. Wear sunscreen and protective clothing even on those days.

-The higher the altitude and the closer to the equator, the greater the UV exposure and thus higher the risk of skin cancer.

-Certain medications can make you more photosensitive and as we age we typically take more medications...so use sunscreen and cover up.



**Remember to Stay Hydrated  
and drink plenty of water  
while out in the Sun!**



# Helping More Veterans With PTSD

Improvements Through Evidence Based Protocols (EBP's) for the treatment of PTSD



LCSW Megan Adams conducting a PTSD Growth Group session at the VA Medical Center, Behavioral Health Clinic.

VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System has made some behind the scenes changes to its Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) program to improve the process for Veterans receiving care. As part of recent system-wide redesign, VASNHS' PTSD team has standardized many treatments and is focused on offering evidence based protocols (EBP's) for the treatment of PTSD. During the intake or screening process, Veterans are oriented that the PTSD program is a voluntary, time-limited treatment program that includes use of EBPs either in an individual therapy or group format.

Veterans have the option to participate in either group or individual EBP therapy and can participate in both should they choose, but it's not required. A treatment plan, to include the type of therapy and frequency will be determined by the treating provider and Veteran when they jointly review treatment goals. To further clarify mandatory and optional groups, Phase II PTSD group sessions are now called our "elective" groups. "Something that has not needed to be adjusted with the PTSD system redesign is the process we take in orienting our Veterans to enhancements or treatments that could support their long-term recovery goals," said Megan Adams, Licensed Clinical Social Worker working with Veterans in the VASNHS PTSD program.

"Before and after our system redesign, we have reviewed VASNHS enhancements such as the Veterans Recovery Center programming, Recreational Therapy, Peer Support, Vet Centers and community groups such as MVP, WWP, Team RWB, and veteran service organizations." While the PTSD program and the addictive disorders treatment program (ADTP) program are still offered at the North Las Vegas VA Medical Center, community VA clinics also offer EBP's for treatment of mental health conditions. Additionally, with the roll out of VA Video Connect, Veterans can often also access EBPs throughout via Telehealth technology.

With the changes, Veterans should see no difference in the level or quality of care they expect. "There is help and treatment for PTSD," Adams said. "We can orient Veterans on PTSD programming options and assist them in finding an appropriate treatment." "To prepare for these changes, Veterans should discuss treatment with their provider. If they both agree the Veteran would benefit from PTSD Programming at the VA medical center, their provider will place a PTSD consult and the Veteran will be scheduled for an intake for treatment planning.

**For more information about VASNHS' PTSD Program and Mental Health Services, call 702-791-9062.**

# VASNHS Research: New Brain Wave Technology

VASNHS Research Department Gets Demo on Electroencephalography Device



VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System Research Service is working with medical technology innovator WAVi to study brainwave activity with new equipment. The Electroencephalography

device, or EEG, is cutting-edge technology that measures the brain's performance, and can help to identify patterns of symptoms and effectiveness of treatments.

"We measure a brain's voltage," said Dr. David Oakley, WAVi CEO, who travelled to Las Vegas to demonstrate the device to several interested VASNHS staff. "Whenever your brain performs a task, it produces a spike in voltage. We look at markers that tell us how fast your brain is and determine a 'brain age.' A normal brain slows as you get older. As physicians, we try to optimize that, so we don't decline as much as we age. "

VASNHS will be the first VA facility in the nation to use this system to gather data. Research Service and WAVi representatives introduced the device to VASNHS staff through several live demonstrations.

"This is really to generate interest among staff about how they might use this device to measure change," said Dr. Alicia Brown, Associate Chief of Staff, Research. "By introducing these opportunities, research service is trying to be at the cutting edge. We are always looking out for new technologies or approaches, and how can we use them here to improve Veteran health."

The device is especially useful to the VA as a tool to measure Veterans who have suffered head injuries. "We also look at a brain's cognitive resources," said Oakley, "and that decreases with concussions or traumatic brain injuries." The system is also extremely useful in gathering information about common mental illnesses such as anxiety, depression,

and PTSD. "This tool is not meant to meant to diagnose," he said, "but just as a measurement in different levels of brainwave activity. In the future, once all of this data has been collected for different populations, I think that clinicians can predict the change in brainwave activity based on what type of intervention is used."

WAVi donated the equipment, which has a value of \$8,500, to VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System Research Services. "This VA has been very proactive and open to research. It's a new facility, excited staff, and energetic to try new things. I expect that when someone walks in the door, we can do a four minute test, and be able to direct them through AI to where it thinks treatment should start."



Dr. David Oakley, WAVi CEO demonstrates how his device is attached to a patient

The VA will collect the data on a volunteer-only basis, and will measure the results before and after treatments are conducted. "I would like interested researchers to design a study that we could use here," said Brown. "We want to take these small studies here, perfect the methodology, and then the goal is to disseminate our findings throughout the VA, and then beyond just the VA, to the scientific community as a whole."



## Upcoming Events April - June 2020 ( Go to [www.lasvegas.va.gov](http://www.lasvegas.va.gov) for current dates & times)

- April** - Sexual Assault Awareness Month
- April 19 - 25** - National Medical Laboratory Professionals Week
- May** - National Mental Health & Asian - Pacific American Month
- May 3-9** - Public Service Recognition Week
- May 6-12** - National Nurses Week

- May 11-15** - VA Research Week
- June** - National PTSD Awareness Month
- June** - LGBTQ Pride Month
- June** - VA "Be Safe. Prevent Falls" Month
- June 22-27** - National Veterans Golden Age Games - Madison WI



**VASNHS NEWSLETTER IS  
PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY**  
VASNHS Public Affairs  
North Las Vegas VA Medical Center  
6900 North Pecos Road  
North Las Vegas, NV 89086  
Email: [VHALASPAO@va.gov](mailto:VHALASPAO@va.gov)

## Changing Behavior for Better Health

The VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System (VASNHS) *"To The Point Newsletter"* was designed to give Veterans, families, caregivers, and stakeholders information on the programs, services and the knowledge to better educate them of whole-health approaches to wellness.

Together, with a Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT), each Veteran works together with health care professionals to plan for whole-person care and life-long health and wellness. The Veteran is the focal point at the center of the health team so he or she can make informed decisions about their health care plan with the provider, nursing, nutrition, mental health, and services in the VA and local community.



# Special Notice

## Protective Measures To Follow For COVID-19

Following national CDC, state and local guidelines in slowing the spread of COVID-19, VASNHS is posting informational signage in print and digital formats at all facilities to help inform Veterans and their families on precautions to take when enforcing "social distancing" and taking personal protective measures.

If you want to know more about how to do your part and what updates we are implementing on a daily basis, please go to our website: [www.Lasvegas.va.gov](http://www.Lasvegas.va.gov) and look for the COVID-19 webpage for all on-going and up-to-date information.

### COVID-19 ALERT

If you have a fever, cough or other cold symptoms,  
be prepared to talk about recent travel and/or contact with others with these symptoms.

#### 1 ASK FOR A MASK



Make sure the mask covers your mouth and nose.

#### 2 KEEP HANDS CLEAN



Use hand sanitizer or soap and water.

#### 3 TELL US ABOUT IT



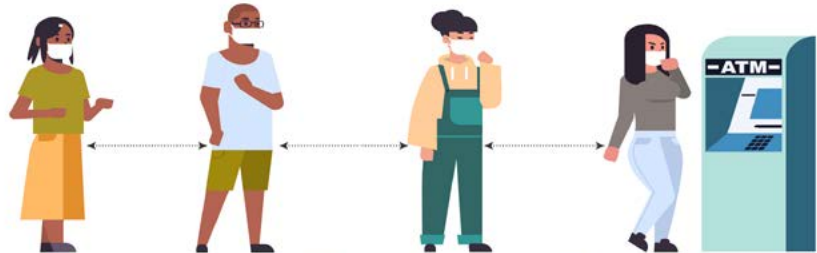
Report any recent travel and your symptoms.



### COVID-19

## Social distancing

Maintain 1.8 meter (6 feet) of distance at all times if in public



\*Only wear a mask if your having symptoms of illness\*



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration  
Southern Nevada Healthcare System



For the latest information in the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System  
check out the following WEB links:

VASNHS Website  
Free Email Alerts



Scan Here to Sign-up!



[www.facebook.com/LasVegasVA](https://www.facebook.com/LasVegasVA)



[www.twitter.com/VALasVegas](https://www.twitter.com/VALasVegas)



[www.myhealth.va.gov](https://www.myhealth.va.gov)



[www.instagram.com/VALasVegas](https://www.instagram.com/VALasVegas)

VASNHS YouTube



Scan Here for videos!