

Arizona health care leaders warn against Super Bowl gatherings

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PHOENIX (3TV/CBS 5) - The big game could be a big problem if Arizonans don't socially distance this Super Bowl Sunday. That's the word from Arizona health care leaders who worry about a potential spike in COVID-19 cases associated with Super Bowl gatherings.

"We're in the fourth quarter. Let's not have the Super Bowl become a bunch of small super-spreader events," said Dr. Michael White, Valleywise Health's chief clinical officer.

"Any gathering of individuals with whom you don't live with offers the opportunity for spread to occur," said Dr. Marjorie Bessel, Banner Health's chief clinical officer.

The warnings come as COVID-19 cases trend downward in Arizona, though the state isn't yet out of the woods.

"At Banner Health, our ICUs remain very busy. ICU occupancy is still 10% higher than it was during the peak of the summer surge," Dr. Bessel said.

Statewide, 44% of hospitalized patients are COVID-19 positive.

"The virus still exists within the community. We need to continue to reduce that transmission," Dr. White said.

Both Valleywise Health and Banner Health say the pressure is gradually easing on their hospital systems.



"We're taking this time to allow folks to -- as our census has dropped, as our COVID-19 numbers have dropped -- to take some time off," Dr. White said.

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(Source: 3TV/CBS 5)

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"We do expect for external contracted labor individuals to begin to leave the Banner Health system as we have a reduction in numbers," Dr. Bessel said.

Banner Health says so far it's helped administer 125,000 vaccinations, saying widespread vaccinations will be key to getting the pandemic under control.

Arizona's health care leaders say they're hopeful vaccine supply will increase in the coming weeks and months, especially with the anticipated emergency authorization of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

They're encouraging everyone who's eligible to sign up for a vaccination appointment no matter which brand vaccine is being used.



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(Source: 3TV/CBS 5)