

**FORSYTH COUNTY HEALTH
Department News Releases**

(Winston-Salem) An outreach activity for syphilis and HIV Prevention has hit Forsyth County. For the past three years, there has been an alarming increase in the incidence of syphilis in Forsyth County. In 1995 alone, there were 269 cases of early syphilis reported to the Forsyth County Health Department. Since many infected patients do not have symptoms and therefore may not seek medical attention, the actual numbers could be even greater. In 1995, North Carolina ranked fifth in the country with 15.8 primary and secondary syphilis cases for every 100,000 residents, according to the State HIV/STD Control Section. Only Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas and Tennessee had higher rates.

In response to Forsyth County's high number of syphilis cases, several state, local, and private agencies have formed W.H.A.T.'s U.P (Winston-Salem Health Action Teams United for Prevention) to increase education awareness of Syphilis, HIV and other STDs, and to promote early intervention. This collaborative effort involves the Forsyth County Health Department, STEP ONE Substance Abuse Services, the State HIV/STD Control Section, and other community agencies.

During the month of October, an intensive outreach and education effort was conducted through door-to-door outreach, community presentations, and other activities. Free screening, treatment and counseling for syphilis, and HIV counseling and testing was offered on site.

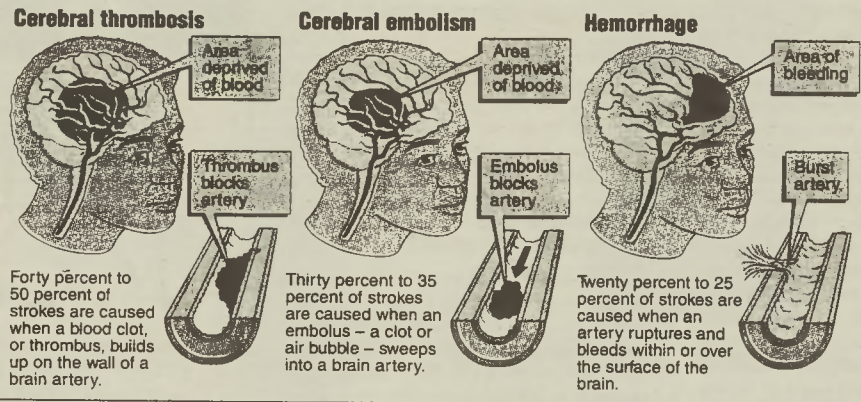
Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) not uncommonly found in certain areas, particularly where drug abuse is high. Factors contributing to this trend include low socioeconomic and education levels, the exchange of sex for drugs, multiple sex partners, and unprotected sex. Left untreated, syphilis may progress and cause damage to the heart, brain and other organs. Syphilis is also a major concern for pregnant women, since newborns may then become infected. Early detection of primary and secondary syphilis, along with prompt reporting of these cases, continue to be the major controlling factors for an epidemic.

The 269 cases of infectious Syphilis reported in 1995 for Forsyth County was the send highest number of cases in the state, only behind Mecklenburg County, and 130 more cases than reported in Guilford County for the same time period. The case rate for Forsyth County is 97 per 100,000, far exceeding the state's case rate of 33 per 100,000. In addition, the rate of syphilis among ethnic/racial minorities in North Carolina is approximately 30-fold that for Whites. In Forsyth County alone, 94% of the 269 cases were among minorities in 1995.

For testing information, contact Dennis Joyner of the Forsyth Department of Health and Human Services at (910)727-8172, extension 3845.

+ HEALTH BEAT +

Types and causes of stroke



SOURCE:AMA Encyclopedia of Medicine

KRT

Facts about stroke

- Stroke is the nation's third leading killer; 150,000 die from stroke each year.
- 550,000 people have strokes each year, including 25,000 under age 45.
- The Southeast has a higher-than-average death rate from stroke; Virginia ranks No. 9 in the top 10 states for highest stroke deaths; South Carolina is No. 1.
- Stroke kills more American women each year than breast cancer; women account for 43 percent of the victims and 60 percent of the deaths.
- Among women under age 45, stroke (brain attack) is more common than heart attack.
- Women over age 30 who smoke and take high-estrogen oral contraceptives have a stroke risk 22 times higher than average.
- African Americans have double the stroke rate of white Americans; they have a disproportion-

- ately high incidence of risk factors for stroke.
 - Risk factors are hypertension, diabetes, obesity, smoking, sickle cell anemia, heavy drinking, heart disease, cocaine/crack use, and a previous stroke.
 - Warning signs of stroke:
 - Sudden weakness or numbness of face, arm, leg on one side of the body
 - Sudden dimness or loss of vision, particularly in one eye
 - Loss of speech, or trouble talking or understanding speech
 - Sudden, severe headaches with no apparent cause
 - Unexplained dizziness, unsteadiness, or sudden falls, especially along with the other symptoms.
- Source: American Heart Association, National Stroke Association

FLU SEASON IS UPON US AGAIN

It is flu season again and therefore, time to discuss influenza, which will be picking up momentum in the weeks ahead. Flu season is from late fall to early spring, with the highest flu activity occurring between late December and early March. "The best prevention is the flu shot, which must be taken every year before flu season begins. Since it takes two weeks for the flu shot to provide protection, between mid-October and mid-November is the recommended time for flu shots in this area", says Barbara Carter, Assistant Director of Nursing at the Forsyth County Health Department.

Each year a new vaccine is made to protect against the different types of flu strains circulating throughout the world. The different flu strains may change in chemical makeup from year to year so that people who received a flu shot or had the flu in previous years are not necessarily immune to the current strain of influenza virus. Therefore, it is necessary to be inoculated each year in order to maintain immunity to the virus.

Influenza, commonly known as the flu, is a viral infection of the nose, throat, bronchial tubes and lungs. Persons with the flu, usually have fever, chills, cough, soreness and aching in their back, arms and legs. Most people are only sick for a few days, but some develop serious illnesses that require hospitalization. Unfortunately, some people die as a result of influenza and its related complications.

- Ms. Carter recommends that "people who work or live closely with an 'increased risk' group as well as those who are at 'increased risk' should get the vaccine every year." Increased risk people include:
- a.) Adults or children with long-term heart or lung problems (i.e., asthma, cystic fibrosis, etc.)
 - b.) Residents of nursing homes or other chronic care institutions
 - c.) Healthy people over 65 years of age
 - d.) People being treated for kidney disease, anemia or asthma
 - e.) People with diabetes, especially those 25-64 years of age (they are seven times more likely to die from the flu as those without)
 - f.) People who have a lower resistance to infections (e.g., people who have undergone transplant surgery, people who are HIV+ or have AIDS)
 - g.) Children on long-term treatment with aspirin
- People who can easily infect others include:
- 1.) Physicians, nurses, and other personnel in both hospital and outpatient care settings who have extensive contact with high risk patients in all age groups, including infants
 - 2.) Home health care workers (visiting nurses, volunteer workers, etc.)
 - 3.) People who live with 'increased risk' people

Therefore, others for whom the shot is strongly recommended are health care workers and family members having extensive contact with high-risk patients.

For persons older than nine, one dose of the vaccine is sufficient. Children 6 months to nine years old are required to have two doses of the vaccine (4 weeks apart) unless they have had this vaccine in the past (in this case one dose will be sufficient).

Flu vaccines are available at the Forsyth County Health Department located at 799 Highland Avenue. The charge for the flu shot is \$9.00. Please call your health care provider or the public health clinic at 727-8231 For More Information.

GETTING REGULAR CHECK-UPS CAN PREVENT MANY HEALTH PROBLEMS!