YORK-Cocktail dresses are the toast of the town this season.

They're the solution for any party, and most can be adapted either for daytime or black-tie occasions.

The return of the cocktail dress is really about fashion's love affair with all things feminine and retro-inspired," says Gregg Andrews, fashion director at Nordstrom.

The 1940s and '50s seem to be particularly influential, he says. "We're seeing a fitted bodice, fuller skirt - often knee-length to mid-calfwith a raised or natural waist, a very defined waist.'

Other details are ruching. ruffles, beading and even attached brooches.

Lace and chiffon are popular fabrics for dresses as are sheer or "illusion" fabrics that allow you to see the skin through "a veil of fabric," Andrews says. "It's not as overtly sexy while still being alluring.

Hints of the 1920s can be seen in straighter-shaped dresses with dropped waist and asymmetrical or handkerchief hems and a little bit of beading

It can be magical when a woman wears a "real" cocktail dress, one that was designed to be both chic and easy for when a woman was indeed drinking, designer Karl Lagerfeld says.

"It's an image very much from the '50s. Chanel, Jacques Fath and Balenciaga were famous for `cocktail dresses.' Women always wore hats then," Lagerfeld says.

His fall-holiday Lagerfeld Gallery collection features a dramatic one-shoulder sheer

overlay with a high waist over a strapless beaded sheath, and a brown sleeve less dress with a pleated hemline, beaded waistband and white high-neck collar.

"Women are becoming more and more comfortable with the idea of dresses because more dresses are available to them. They

don't offer the flexibility in fit that separates do, but the variety of styles makes up for it," says Andrews. "Women are enjoying dressing in the more feminine way that is so fashionable now."

Banana Republic executive vice president of design Deborah Lloyd is one of the con-

time now," she the fact that have to think SO much. The and bottom already togeth-

relied on this fall are

One of Banana Republic's cocktail looks is a pleated taffeta dress. "It's just one of those dresses that work," Lloyd says. "It's very easy to wear. Who would've thought that of a pleated cocktail

Pleats can indeed be hard to wear, but, first off, these pleats are vertical not horizontal. Lloyd explains that because the pleats are fine,

they create a flattering feminine and they'll hide things under-neath."

isn't

dress

"I'm wearing dresses all the There "I love the fabdon't ric and the taffefind them easy. Lloyd

says the silk easily covered with a cardigan to adapt for weather or work. She pairs them with cute flats, high-heeled strappy shoes or higher-heeled

"This dress is nice because if you wear with denim jacket and boots, you can wear it in

the

has move-

available in silver or black, which is the predominant color on retail racks. Jewel tones, especially ruby red and teal blue, are another option, as are other metallics, including light gold and bronze.

"I do tend to like dress that aren't too colorful. I like colors that are non-colors. They allow you to wear the dress. You can be chic and beautiful, but people won't see the dress walk in," Lloyd says.

But with all the choices available, Andrews suggests trying something other than the round-neck, sleeveless black sheath that's become the standard "little black dress." "There's nothing wrong with that dress-it always looks good-but it's not this season's black dress.'

Because of their flexibility, a cocktail dress generally is a wiser purchase than a ballgown unless you're one of the few people whose calendars are filled with formal blacktie affairs.

"Evening gowns will always be a part of holiday fashion, but so few women have an opportunity to wear a true gown that, in most instances, women will find a cocktail dress a more practical, more wearable addition to the wardrobe," Andrews says. "If you're someone who travels. someone who takes cruises, you can take your new dress on board for your winter vacation. You can also wear it to evening weddings.'

Andrews predicts that dresses will be popular for the next few fashion cycles. We're definitely seeing dresses coming into spring 2006,"

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## Baby stroke and its treatment

Continued from page 3B

tion of her skull to relieve massive brain swelling and prevent further damage. When she woke up a week later, she was like a newborn, unable even to hold her head

After four months of hospitalization and intensive therapy at a rehabilitation unit, today the Connellsville, Pa. toddler can sit, roll over and stand with support, although she still is weak on one side.

"So far, she has beaten all the odds and has surprised everybody," Gonzales says.

Doctors aren't sure what caused Alexzandra's stroke, but she was lucky: Her parents raced her to a local hospital that immediately recognized she needed neurology

Too often, children face a significant delay, say Pitetti and Goldstein. Hospitals fre-



quently make stroke a diagnosis of last resort. Parents may not recognize acute stroke symptoms-such as one-sided weakness, loss of speech and, in babies,

And if your baby seems to favor one side, insist on a neurology exam-it might be an undetected newborn stroke that requires physical therapy, Goldstein adds.

"Moms need to trust their gut instinct," she says. "Know

this can happen." The Charlotte Bost.

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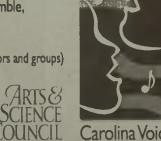
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