



Forsyth County
Department of Public Health

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Forsyth County Infant Mortality Rate Up Slightly in 2012

Forsyth County's infant mortality rate rose slightly in 2012 to 10.2 infant deaths per 1,000 live births as compared to the 2011 rate of 10.0.

According to information released today by the North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics, there were 47 infant deaths and 4,624 live births in Forsyth County in 2012; compared to 46 infant deaths and 4,581 live births in 2011. This is the first time in five years that the number of live births in Forsyth County and North Carolina has increased. As with last year, Forsyth County's overall infant mortality rate is the highest of the five (5) urban North Carolina counties. The State's overall infant mortality rate was 7.4 deaths per 1,000 live births; up slightly from its 2011 rate of 7.2.

The Forsyth County infant death rate for African Americans was 14.8 deaths per 1,000 live births, compared to the White rate of 8.0 deaths per 1,000 live births. The persistent disparity seen in birth outcomes between African Americans and Whites is unacceptable.

Forsyth County Health Director Marlon Hunter says, "Families in Forsyth County need to get back to basics in order to reduce infant mortality. Every effort should be made to encourage optimal health during a woman's lifespan. When women are in good health before pregnancy, the groundwork is set for a healthy pregnancy and a positive birth outcome." He further states, "That health department staff and community partners work hard day after day, year after year to reduce infant mortality in our community. It is a complex and challenging problem with solutions that go beyond health and healthcare and include topics such as education, poverty, good paying jobs, and high-quality affordable housing."

Back to Basics:

Good nutrition – Women need healthy diets rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy and lean/vegetable protein. If you are planning a pregnancy, a multivitamin with folic acid is a must to prevent certain birth defects. Along with good nutrition, being at a good body weight is important for a healthy pregnancy.

Adequate rest – Getting adequate rest is essential for overall health. Usually, seven to eight hours of sleep per night is adequate for most people but more may be needed during pregnancy.

Stress management – Stress is a part of our everyday life and can be acute, episodic or chronic. Chronic stress is most damaging because it wears a person down over time. Examples of chronic stressors include poverty, racism, a bad job situation or unpleasant home life. Although chronic stress may become the norm of everyday life, women with chronic stress need to talk with their health care provider and follow-up with recommended treatment and behavioral health support.

Exercise and physical activity – Leading a physically active lifestyle is good for overall health and helps prevent chronic health conditions. It also helps women maintain a healthy weight. Being physically active is as simple as walking 30-60 minutes at least five days a week.

Keeping regular appointments with your healthcare provider - Seeing a healthcare provider on a regular basis for healthcare exams and screening test can help find problems before they start. For women who are of childbearing age and are sexually active, it is important that they talk with their healthcare provider about family planning and protection from STI's. The best way to reduce the risk of an unintended pregnancy among women who are sexually active is to use effective birth control correctly and consistently. Healthcare providers will also discuss the importance of a tobacco-free lifestyle.

Breastfeeding – Breastfeed for the baby's first year of life. There are lifelong health benefits for both mom and baby.