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Health Sunday Topic: **HIV/AIDS**

Dr. Coyne-Beasley, MD, MPH of UNC Pediatrics, Internal Medicine and the School of Public Health, states that "**HIV/AIDS is a leading cause of death for African Americans** and we should do all we can to prevent acquiring the disease. **Knowing your status and the status of your partners is important for anyone contemplating activities that place them at risk for infection.**"

HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus. This is the virus that causes AIDS. HIV is different from most other viruses because it attacks the immune system. The immune system gives our bodies the ability to fight infections. HIV finds and destroys a type of white blood cell (T cells or CD4 cells) that the immune system must have to fight disease.

AIDS stands for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. AIDS is the final stage of HIV infection. It can take years for a person infected with HIV, even without treatment, to reach this stage. Having AIDS means that the virus has weakened the immune system to the point at which the body has a difficult time fighting infection. When someone has one or more specific infections, certain cancers, or a very low number of T cells, he or she is considered to have AIDS.

According to KAISER State Health facts, 67% of all cumulative AIDS cases through 2006 in the State of North Carolina were African Americans!

How HIV Is and Is Not Transmitted

HIV is a fragile virus. It cannot live for very long outside the body. As a result, the virus **is not transmitted** through day-to-day activities such as shaking hands, hugging, or a casual kiss. You cannot become infected from a toilet seat, drinking fountain, doorknob, dishes, drinking glasses, food, or pets. You also cannot get HIV from mosquitoes. HIV is primarily found in the blood, semen, or vaginal fluid of an infected person. HIV is transmitted in 3 main ways:

- Having sex (anal, vaginal, or oral) with someone infected with HIV
- Sharing needles and syringes with someone infected with HIV
- Being exposed (fetus or infant) to HIV before or during birth or through breast feeding

HEALTH SUNDAY IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY is a program of Health Tips. It is provided by the Community Health Coalition in cooperation with the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Durham and Vicinity for church goes each 4th Sunday.



Symptoms of HIV Infection

The only way to know whether you are infected is to be tested for HIV. You cannot rely on symptoms alone because many people who are infected with HIV do not have symptoms for many years. Someone can look and feel healthy but can still be infected. In fact, one quarter of the HIV-infected persons in the United States do not know that they are infected. Many people who are infected with HIV do not have any symptoms at all for 10 years or more.

The following may be warning signs of advanced HIV infection:

- rapid weight loss
- dry cough
- recurring fever or profuse night sweats
- profound and unexplained fatigue
- swollen lymph glands in the armpits, groin, or neck
- diarrhea that lasts for more than a week
- white spots or unusual blemishes on the tongue, in the mouth, or in the throat
- pneumonia
- red, brown, pink, or purplish blotches on or under the skin or inside the mouth, nose, or eyelids
- memory loss, depression, and other neurological disorders

However, no one should assume they are infected if they have any of these symptoms. Each of these symptoms can be related to other illnesses. Again, **the only way to determine whether you are infected is to be tested for HIV infection.**

Prevention of HIV/AIDS

To protect yourself, remember these ABCDs:

A=Abstinence from sexual activity until marriage

B=Be faithful in a marital and monogamous relationship

C=Condoms

D=Drugs, don't use them, especially IV drugs or drugs with needles

Treatment

There is no cure for HIV/AIDS; however, there are medical treatments that can help individuals live longer and healthier lives. If you believe you may have HIV/AIDS get tested to know your status. If you have HIV/AIDS please see a physician for expert advice and management.

Key Resources

- **CDC INFO: Phone 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636) 24 Hours/Day**
- **www.aids.gov (Get one-stop access to US Government HIV/AIDS information)**
- **www.hivtest.org (Locate an HIV testing site in your community.)**
- **www.cdcnpin.org (National Prevention Information Network)**
- **www.caare-inc.org**

Your Healthy Sunday Coordinator is _____

A Message from your Community Health Coalition in Association with the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Durham and Vicinity, North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, Central Carolina Black Nurses' Council Inc., and Durham Regional Hospital.

REMEMBER: A HEALTHY DURHAM INCLUDES YOU!

Note: Please make enough copies of this flyer to distribute to each morning service attendee.