

## Help prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome

Dealing with a crying baby can be highly stressful. No one plans to shake an infant. Research shows crying is the # 1 trigger leading caregivers to violently shake, injure, and even accidentally kill their babies.

Parents and caregivers can recognize that **crying is a natural and normal part of a child's development.** Follow these steps to prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome.

First, try to comfort the baby:

- Check to see if the baby is hungry, too hot or too cold, or needs a clean diaper.
- Hold the baby and provide gentle motion.
- Play soft music, relaxing sounds, or create white noise with a vacuum cleaner or fan.

If nothing works to calm the baby:

- Place the child on his or her back in the crib and go to another room or step outside for a brief period of time. Check on the baby every 10-15 minutes.
- Take a break. Ask another caretaker to come in and give you some relief.
- Take steps to help you manage the stress. Take the baby for a walk or take a ride in the car.

For those babies who have colic or intense periods of crying, the crying is often worse at night and usually reduces by the fourth month. **Try to stay calm. Remember, babies do not die from crying in their cribs.** They *can* die when frustrated adults lose control.

For more information, go on-line to: <http://www.mds4kids.com/purple.html>



# INFANT DEATH IN OUR COMMUNITY


## Forsyth County Report


Forsyth County  
Infant Mortality Reduction Coalition

[www.HelpOurBabies.org](http://www.HelpOurBabies.org)

Statistical information provided by the Forsyth County Department of Public Health & North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics

April 2008

  
Forsyth County  
Department of Public Health  
The FCIMR Coalition, housed within the  
Department of Public Health, is a community  
partnership of organizations and individuals  
working together to reduce infant mortality in  
our community.

  
Forsyth County  
Infant Mortality Reduction Coalition  
PO Box 686  
Winston-Salem, NC 27102-0686

PRESORTED  
FIRST-CLASS MAIL  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
Winston-Salem, NC  
Permit No. 714

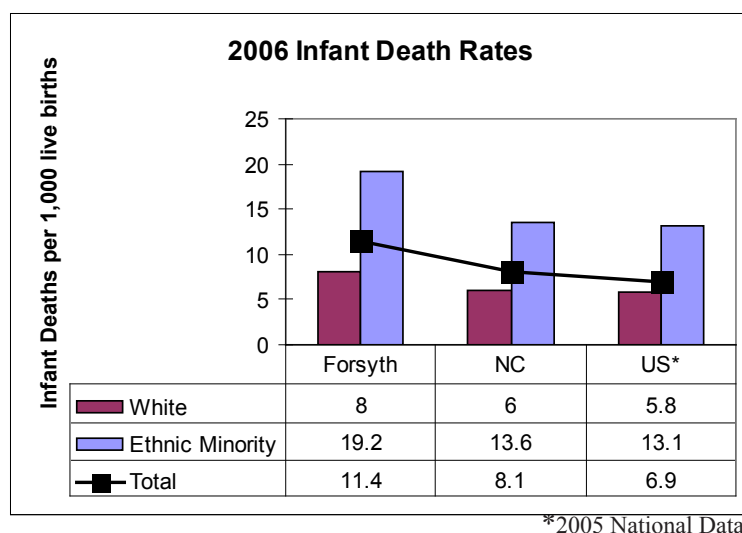
## What is infant mortality?

- Any babies who are born alive and die before their first birthdays are considered infant deaths.
- Stillborn babies are considered fetal deaths. They are not counted among infant deaths.

*“Our son was a fighter but could not survive with his lungs being so immature. He was with us for about 12 hours. He passed away early in the morning. We were able to hold and love him throughout the night. It was the saddest, hardest, and worst night of our lives. We love you and miss you, son.”*

—Local parents of a baby born at 25 weeks gestation – during the 5th month of pregnancy.

## Is this a problem in our community?



- Each infant death is a tragedy in the life of a family. Each life lost is one too many.
- North Carolina is ranked 46th in the nation for infant deaths (meaning only 4 states have an infant death problem worse than ours).
- The United States ranks 28th in the world for infant death, meaning 27 other countries have lower rates of infant death. We're right behind Cuba.
- The chart to the left has the most recent information available. We often see variations from one year to the next. *The significantly higher risk of death for minority babies continues to be a major problem for our community.*

## Why are our babies dying?

Premature birth and health problems related to prematurity continue to be the leading causes of infant death in our community and in the nation.

- **3 out of every 4** Forsyth County infants that died in 2006 were born premature (41 out of the 56 babies who died).
- Of all our infants that died in 2006, over half were born at least three months early.
- Some very premature babies do live, though many have serious medical conditions for life.
- Other leading causes of infant death are birth defects, complications due to the mother's poor health, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).



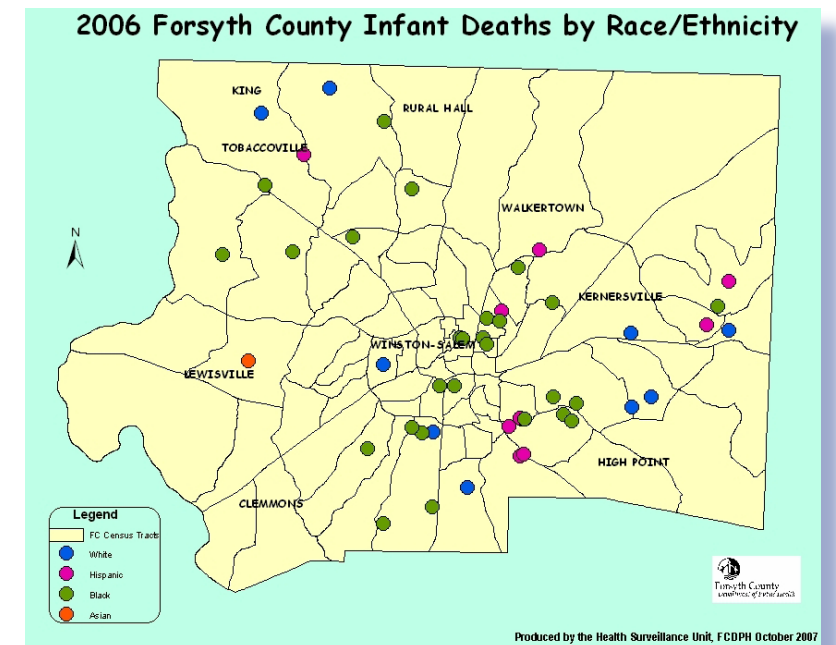
Notice the father's wedding band on the wrist of this extremely premature baby girl.

*“No one ever imagines they will experience extreme prematurity or the death of a child. We sure didn't.”*

—Local parents of triplets born each weighing less than two pounds. Two of the babies survived. One baby spent 100 days in Neonatal Intensive Care Unit; the other spent 143 days in the NICU before coming home.

## Who is affected?

- Infant mortality affects families of all racial and ethnic groups in our community no matter what their family income.
- Babies are dying in all parts of town, not just in one neighborhood or one area of the county.
- The map to the right shows each of the infant deaths in Forsyth County in 2006.



## Financial costs of premature birth

Each extremely premature birth (before the fifth month of pregnancy is complete) is a tragedy for a family, for a community, and for our nation.

The costs of extremely premature birth are staggering. There is no way to put a dollar figure on the grief, pain, and hardship that families of these babies go through. One way to measure the cost of prematurity is to calculate hospital discharge data. These figures do NOT include all of the follow up surgeries, treatments, and doctors' care that can continue for years for the babies who do survive but only reflect the hospital charges at the time the baby is initially discharged from the hospital.



- The average hospital charge for a healthy newborn in Forsyth County in 2005 was \$1,150. (Keep in mind that the average total bill including all other charges is over \$7,000.)
- The average hospital charge for an extremely premature infant in Forsyth County in 2005 was **\$70,920 per infant**.
- In 2005, there were 481 Forsyth County babies born premature. **Total hospital charges for these babies were over \$10.6 million.**
- Of those 481 babies, 106 were born extremely premature (before 25 weeks of completed pregnancy). **Hospital charges for these 106 babies were \$7.5 million.**