

## African American Women and HIV

By Idong Essiet-Gibson

HIV the virus that causes AIDS is the leading cause of death for African American women between the ages of 25 and 44 in the United States. In Maryland as in most other states in the US, African Americans have the highest HIV infection rates. There are many reasons being given for this, including, poverty, lack of access to health care, lack of power to negotiate safe sex, drug use, among others.

The risk factors that contribute to the higher rates of HIV in African American women include: male-to-female transmission through heterosexual sex, particularly unprotected sex with partners who engage in risky behaviors, injecting drug users who share needles, infection with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) which make it easier for HIV to enter the body, and physical and sexual abuse which is found to be significantly higher in women at high risk. There is some concern that HIV is also being spread among

the prison population which is predominantly of African American males, who return to communities and spread the virus to their sexual partners or drug using partners. The CDC has also found that African Americans had the poorest rates of surviving AIDS and were the largest number of late-testers, people getting tested a year after they have been infected with HIV.

How can African American women protect themselves? First of all by getting tested to ensure that you are not already infected with the virus. If you are HIV-positive there are resources within the community to assist you in living "positively" (**HIV/AIDS Services, Dennis Avenue Health Center, 2000 Dennis Avenue, Silver Spring, 240-777-1869**). If you are HIV-negative there are certain precautions that you can take to keep from getting infected. They include: abstinence, being faithful to your partner and avoiding multiple sex partners, convincing your partner to use a condom when engaging in sexual



intercourse, avoiding sharing of needles with infected persons, and increasing your knowledge about HIV by reading about the disease and staying informed.

The CDC recommends the following steps to protect yourself: If you are sexually active (having oral, anal, or vaginal sex), use latex condoms to reduce your chances of getting HIV. Drug users who cannot or will not stop injecting drugs should use new, sterile syringes to prepare and inject drugs. If you are getting a tattoo or having your body pierced, ask what procedures they use to prevent the spread of HIV. The African American Health Program of Montgomery County provides resources and information to assist people to keep from spreading the disease.

A list of HIV testing sites in Maryland is available at <http://www.hivtest.org>

Information taken from [www.caps.ucsf.edu](http://www.caps.ucsf.edu) and [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

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## Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies

The Black Babies S.M.I.L.E. (Start More Infants Living Equally Healthy) program grew out of the African American Health Programs Infant Mortality coalition to address the need for education, support and referral services for black parents in Montgomery County. In Montgomery County, Maryland

- One out of every 58 African American babies died before one year of age as compared to one out of every 444 white babies in 1999,
- African American babies are more than four times as likely to die before their first birthday as white babies,
- 12.3% of African American babies at birth are low-birth weight (below 5.5 pounds) as compared to 6.6% for whites,
- Low-birth weight and prematurity are the biggest causes of infant mortality and are thought to result from such conditions as stress, hypertension, diabetes, infections, drugs and smoking.

The Black Babies S.M.I.L.E. program is a home visitation and assessment program of high risk pregnant and parenting African American women and women of African descent, which provides case management of mothers and infants up to 1 year of age, education, counseling and referrals to other supportive services. We also offer “Having a Healthy Baby”, “Baby Basics”, and “Preconceptual Health” classes to the community, as well as Breastfeeding support groups, Teen mom support programs, nutrition education for prenatal moms and a breast pump loan program.

The program is staffed by two nurse case managers who provide services to pregnant and parenting moms and their babies, once they are delivered. Saundra Jackson and Nia Williams can be reached at 240-777-4471.



## Prescription Drug Discount Cards

If you did not receive your FREE prescription drug discount card in the mail, you can get one at any County library, regional service center, County health and human services location and at participating pharmacies throughout Montgomery County.

County Executive Douglas M. Duncan announced the program in late September to help County residents cope with the high price of prescription drugs. The free Montgomery Rx cards are available through a program

sponsored by the National Association of Counties (NACo) that offers average savings of 20 percent off the retail price of commonly prescribed drugs.

The cards may be used by all County residents, regardless of age, income, or existing health coverage, and are accepted at more than 120 pharmacies in Montgomery County.

**For more information, go to [www.montgomerycountymd.gov](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov) and click on the Montgomery Rx link.**

## ATTENTION MEN !



Prostate cancer is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading case of male cancer death in the United States. One in every six men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer during his lifetime. It is most common in African American men over age 45 and men with a family history of the disease.

Free prostate cancer screening is available. The screening includes prostate specific antigen (PSA) blood test and a physical exam - the digital rectal exam (DRE). To be eligible for the **free** screening you must be:

- Montgomery County resident
- Age 45-70
- At increased risk for prostate cancer (family history, African American male, and/or experiencing signs and symptoms related to prostate cancer).

- Low-income and/or no health insurance

To get information about a **free** scheduled prostate cancer screening event, call either:

Tonia Lewis - 240-777-1852 or 410-290-8891

Tina Palmer – 240-777-3496

Please remember that prostate cancer is easy to treat and often curable when detected **early!**



## 2005 Health Freedom Walk: A Path to Wellness

**Health Freedom Walk: A Path to Wellness** is an innovative project to promote increased physical activity while making creative use of Underground Railroad trails in Montgomery County and in Baltimore. On April 23, 2005, participants in Montgomery County will walk part of the route our ancestors traveled in their quest for freedom, and, in turn, will become motivated to achieve their own freedom from the slavery of poor health. The Montgomery County walk will take place at the Rural Legacy Trail at Sandy Spring. The 1.5 mile trail (3 miles roundtrip) starts in Woodlawn Park at Layhill and Ednor Roads.

The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, through its African American Health and G.O.S.P.E.L. Programs, is partnering with a program based in Baltimore to implement the **Health Freedom Walk**. C.H.A.M.P. (Community Health Awareness & Monitoring Program) is a community based health education and cardiovascular disease prevention program affiliated with the University of Maryland School of Medicine, Department of Family Medicine.

Those wanting to experience in the **Health Freedom Walk** are encouraged

to participate in physical activity training that will begin six weeks prior to the walk at a number of community sites. The six-week training will also include historical information about the Underground Railroad and the courageous people who "operated" it. To find out about the training sites and dates, please call the African American Health Program at **240-777-1833** for a brochure and registration form for the **Health Freedom Walk**.

## Get Fit! Get Healthy!

Not enough physical activity is a leading cause of obesity and chronic disease in the United States. Almost 400,000 deaths a year are due to being overweight or obese, which is the second most preventable cause of disease in the United States (after tobacco use). Good dietary habits along with moderate physical activity will help reduce the onset of certain chronic diseases by 50 percent.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that the rates of being either obese or overweight are steadily increasing among adults. Studies suggest that approximately 70 percent of

Americans are overweight or obese due to behaviors such as lack of physical activity and poor dietary habits. By becoming physically active 30 minutes a day and eating nutritious foods low in saturated fats you can control weight gain and decrease your risk of illness.

Nutrition also plays a key role in the fight against obesity. Limiting the number of calories consumed daily directly affects weight gain. Foods with fatty acids such as fast foods, cookies, potato chips have many calories and very little nutritional value. Healthier alternatives such as fruits, vegetables,

whole grains, poultry and fish, eaten in moderation, provide fuel for daily activities without providing the excess calories that will eventually be stored as fat.

For more information on how to get fit, get healthy and live longer contact the African American Health Program at 240-777-1833.



## Diabetes Corner



### Diabetes Dining Club

Lincoln Park Community Center

Must register one week before club night

Call Diane Herron 301-421-5767

Meets once a month on

March 14, 2005

April 11, 2005

May 16, 2005

June 13, 2005

July 11, 2005

Dinner contribution - \$5.00



### Diabetes Self Management Classes

Wheaton Regional library

Four classes on Thursdays

March 10, 17, 24, 31, 2005

**Free** classes include:

Educational materials

Activities

Light dinner

Door prizes

Call Diane to register at 301-421-5767

**They can do it, you can do it - one step at a time!**



## HIV/AIDS and African Americans

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is a major health crisis among African Americans. It affects men and women of every age and sexual orientation. African Americans have been disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS since the beginning of the epidemic and the disparity has kept growing. There must be something done to encourage the community to make behavioral changes that might result in the decrease of HIV/AIDS exposure and transmission.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, African Americans now represent more than half of all new HIV infections estimated to occur in the U.S. each year and approximately half of all newly reported AIDS cases. They also account for more people estimated to be living with AIDS and more deaths among persons with AIDS than any other racial/ethnic group. Studies have shown that African Americans with HIV/AIDS may face additional barriers to accessing care than their white counterparts. The following are statistics from the CDC and obtained at <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/Facts/afam.htm>.

### HIV in 2002:

- African Americans accounted for over half of the new HIV diagnoses reported in the United States.
- A study of people diagnosed with HIV found that 56% of "late testers," i.e., those that were diagnosed with AIDS within one year of their HIV diagnosis, were African American. Late testing represents missed opportunities in prevention and treatment of HIV.
- The leading cause of HIV infection among African-American men is sexual contact with other men, followed by injection drug use and heterosexual contact.

The leading cause of HIV infection among African-American women is heterosexual contact, followed by injection drug use. Sixty-two percent of children born to HIV-infected mothers were African American.

### AIDS in 2002:

- African Americans accounted for about 21,000, or 50 percent, of the more than 42,000 estimated AIDS cases diagnosed among adults in the United States.
- The AIDS diagnosis rate among African Americans was almost 11 times the rate among whites. African-American women had a 23 times greater diagnoses rate than white women. African American men had almost a 9 times greater rate of AIDS diagnosis than white men.

Over 162,000 African Americans were living with AIDS in the United States. They accounted for 42% of all people in the United States living with AIDS.

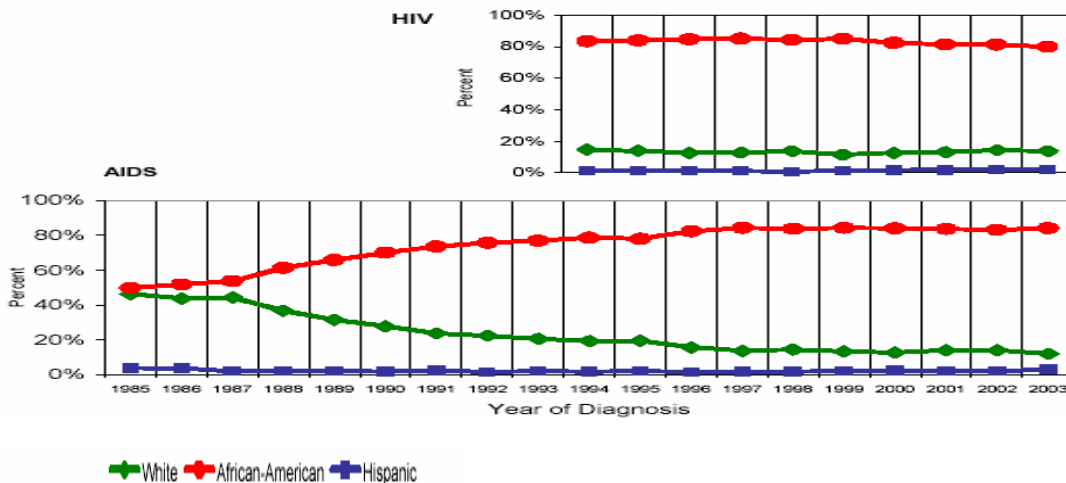
Maryland's AIDS rate was third-highest in the nation in 2002, at 34 reported cases for every 100,000 in population, trailing only Washington, D.C., and New York State, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. About half of the state's HIV and AIDS cases were reported in Baltimore City and second was Prince George's County and Montgomery County had the third-highest number of cases in the state.

The 2003 Maryland HIV/AIDS report, African Americans accounted for nearly 82 percent of the state's cases in 2002, and men made up about 65 percent of the total. This proportion increased to 84% in 2003. This is an alarming number. For more information contact the HIV/AIDS Administration at the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene at 1-800-358-9001 or [www.dhmd.state.md.us/AIDS/](http://www.dhmd.state.md.us/AIDS/). The following is a chart from the Second Quarter 2004 - Data reported through June 30, 2004, which can be accessed at <http://www.dhmd.state.md.us/AIDS/pdf/epi5.pdf>. This chart shows HIV/AIDS trends in the state of Maryland from 1985-2003. Note the alarming difference in occurrences in the African American population as compared to the other ethnic groups.

## MARYLAND HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIOLOGICAL PROFILE - June 30, 2004

### Section VII - HIV and AIDS Case Race/Ethnicity Trends

#### Proportions by Race/Ethnicity of Incident (Newly Diagnosed) Cases during each Calendar Year



HIV case reporting began in 1994.



# ANNOUNCING A NEW SERVICE.....

**Every six seconds** someone in the world is infected with HIV.

**Tonight.....could it be you?**

You can become a statistic, or you can play it safe by using protection **and** getting tested. The African American Health program is committed to eliminating health disparities and improving the number and quality of years of life for African Americans. Join us in our effort.

## **GET TESTED!**

The African American Health Program is now offering **FREE** and **CONFIDENTIAL** oral HIV testing at two locations:

### **East County Services Center**

3300 Briggs Chaney Road  
Silver Spring, MD 20904  
240-777-1833

Monday and Friday

9:00am – 12:00pm By Appointment Only

Wednesday

6:00pm – 9:00pm By Appointment Only

### **Colesville Center**

10415 New Hampshire Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20901  
301-421-5410

Wednesday and Friday

9:00am – 12:00pm Walk-In

Monday and Tuesday

By Appointment Only



**AAHP Newsletter**  
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The African American Health Program is co-sponsored by the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services  
And The People's Community Baptist Church.



3300 Briggs Chaney Road  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904  
www.onehealthylife.org  
240-777-1833  
240-777-1295 TTY



Resources

**African American Health Program** .....240-777-1833  
**Black Babies S.M.I.L.E.**.....240-777-4471  
**Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening**  
 2424 Reedie Drive, Wheaton .....240-777-1750  
**Church-based Health Education Programs** .....240-777-1772  
**Community Clinics**  
 Community Clinic, Inc. ....301-340-7525  
 L'A.M.I. Family Health Clinic .....301-434-8400  
 Mobile Medical Care, Inc. ....301-493-2400  
 Montgomery Volunteer Dental Clinic, Inc. ....301-984-9796  
 The People's Community Wellness Center .....301-847-1172

- Men's Clinic
- Women's Clinic

**Colorectal, Prostate, Oral Cancer Screening**.....240-777-3496  
**Diabetes Education Classes** .....301-421-5767  
**G.O.S.P.E.L. Program**.....240-777-1772  
**HIV/AIDS Services** .....2000 Dennis Avenue, Silver Spring.....240-777-1869

**Maternity, Family Planning, Child Health Services**  
**Service Eligibility Units**  
 Germantown.....12900 Middlebrook Road, Germantown..... 240-777-3591  
 Rockville .....1335 Piccard Drive, Rockville ..... 240-777-3120  
 Silver Spring .....8630 Fenton Street, Silver Spring ..... 240-777-3066

**Oral Health**.....240-777-3496  
**Quit Smoking** .....240-777-3848

\*Can not find a Montgomery County government service, call 240-777-1000\*



3300 Briggs Chaney Road · Silver Spring, MD · 20904