

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B Vaccination

(Is this for me?)

The Hepatitis B virus can be dangerously infectious.

It can lead to cirrhosis and cancer of the liver, and up to 20 percent of patients infected with this agent die before the age of 50.

Approximately 300,000 cases are diagnosed each year, but most infected patients develop no manifestation or only minor flu-like symptoms and jaundice (yellow discoloration of the skin).

The virus spreads through a variety of ways:

1. Sexual intercourse
 2. Contaminated needles (Drug abuse, ear piercing, and tattooing)
 3. Mother to newborn transmission via the blood and breast feeding
 4. Blood transfusion
 5. Cuts in the skin
1. Saliva

Individuals at high-risk for Hepatitis B include:

- Heterosexuals with multiple partners
- Sexually active gay men

- Intravenous drug users
- Health-care workers
- Recipients of certain blood products
- Infants born to infected women (all pregnant women should be tested)
- International travelers who plan to spend six months or more in areas of high infection
- Children born to immigrants from regions where Hepatitis B is very common, such as Southeast Asia
- Anyone living with an infected person

There is no cure for the Hepatitis B virus, but there is a highly effective vaccination.

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, with the concurrence of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Family Physicians, recommends that all newborns and children be immunized against this deadly virus.

If you are expecting a baby; have small children, infants, or teenagers; or **you** fall into any of the high-risk categories above, vaccination should be seriously considered.

If you would like more information regarding the Hepatitis B vaccination, please ask your doctor.

If you are planning to travel abroad, you can call the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta at (404) 322-4559 to determine whether or not you will need Hepatitis B vaccine administered.