

As your healthcare provider,

**I recommend the Hepatitis B vaccine...**

**Please THINK TWICE and vaccinate!!**

Hepatitis B is a hearty virus that causes serious infections in humans. It can lead to liver disease and liver cancer. It lives in the blood and body fluids of an infected person, but it can also survive on surfaces for up to a week. Hepatitis B infection can cause either short-term (up to six months) or life-long problems, but it always wreaks havoc.

### **Newborns need a vaccine, why?**

Infected mothers can pass the virus on to their babies during childbirth, so it's important for all babies to be vaccinated in case the mother doesn't know that she has this virus in her blood. Too many babies have caught Hepatitis B this way, so now they are all vaccinated. Even one baby getting this disease at birth is too many!

### **Why do kids need Hep B vaccine?**

The younger someone is when they get hepatitis B disease, the worse the consequences. Kids don't show symptoms like adults do. If infected at a young age kids are more likely to go undiagnosed and become a chronic carrier of the virus. Chronic carriers have lifelong problems and issues from this infection.

### **I don't engage in "risky" behaviors, so I don't need to worry...right?**

Hepatitis B is spread through blood and body fluids, but this virus can survive outside the body for a week. This means up to 7 days after someone has left blood on something, such as, playground equipment, a water bottle, a school desk, any surface; it can be picked up through an opening in the skin or eyes of another person — a person who isn't "at risk." Just because you don't participate in risky behavior, like having multiple sex partners or injecting IV drugs, doesn't mean that you can't catch this disease. Some other people at higher risk are diabetics and health care workers.



Photo used Courtesy of the CDC.

## Hepatitis B: The Facts.

- **There is no cure for hepatitis B.** Most infections are acute and self-limiting, which means that they go away on their own. Some chronic infections also disappear on their own, but neither one happens without causing harm.
- Hepatitis B disease is called “**The Silent Killer**” because most people don’t know that they have it until it’s too late to treat.
- The hepatitis B virus can live on surfaces at room temperature for up to **seven days**.
- Acute (short-term) hepatitis B infections can last up to 6 months.
- The World Health Organization estimates that 400 million people worldwide are *chronically* infected with hepatitis B.
- 1 in 12 Asian Americans are infected with the hepatitis B Virus. Most do not know that they are infected.
- Hepatitis B is the leading cause of liver cancer in the U.S. and around the world.
- Approximately 78,000 people in the U.S. become infected with the hepatitis B virus every year.
- 5,000-6,000 people in the U.S. die from hepatitis B related liver complications every year.
- A birth dose of Hepatitis B Vaccine has been recommended in the U. S. since 1991.
- Babies born to hepatitis B positive mothers have a 90% chance of being healthy if they are given the hepatitis B vaccine at birth and again in two months.

### Unusual ways that Hepatitis B has been transmitted:

In Rhode Island, 35 patients of an acupuncturist became infected with HBV, the primary source for the outbreak being a patient in the practice. Investigators were not able to determine the precise mechanism of transmission, but theorized it was possibly due to inadequately sterilized needles or the transfer of infectious material from the acupuncturist’s hands to sterilized needles.

CDC reported a case involving a 4-year-old boy in day care who developed acute HBV infection; another child at the center who had a history of biting and scratching was found to be chronically infected with HBV.

The University of Sydney used molecular fingerprinting to provide evidence that a child chronically infected with HBV who had an exudative skin lesion and a history of biting had infected another child in the same day care center.

In a Mississippi nursing home in 2003, two residents died of acute hepatitis B, prompting an investigation. Nine percent of all residents tested HBsAg positive; among residents who routinely received finger-sticks for glucose monitoring, 14 of 38 had acute HBV infection. In this facility, the spring-loaded barrel of a finger-stick device was used for multiple patients.

For additional information on this vaccine and all vaccines please see the following trustworthy resources:

[www.vaccine.chop.edu](http://www.vaccine.chop.edu)

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

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

[www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines)

[www.michigan.gov/immunize](http://www.michigan.gov/immunize)

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

If, after reading this information, you still feel vaccination is not right for you or your child, please follow this advice:

Make sure all health care professionals, including emergency rooms and urgent care centers, know your child is not fully vaccinated. It could help them diagnose and treat a vaccine preventable disease.

The symptoms of hepatitis B are non-specific but can include fever, headache, body aches, and tiredness. The skin or whites of the eyes can also turn yellowish in color.

