

ECHO Q&A

Emergency and Community Health Outreach



BE HEALTHY. BE SAFE. BE READY.

Questions & Sample Answers / ECHO-TV Show # 411 & 412 “Hepatitis B”

(Recording Show: Tuesday, July 22, 2008 / 3-7:30 pm @ TPT)

Suggested pre-interview remarks by host to audience:

- This program is intended to provide information that will help prevent serious illness from Hepatitis B
- Discussion about HIV-AIDS public health concern are intended for adult or mature audiences only

1. What is Hepatitis B AND how do people get sick with Hepatitis B?

Sample Answer:

- Hepatitis B is a virus that is found in the blood, saliva, vaginal fluid or semen of an infected person.
- The Hepatitis B virus is spread when people have sex without using a condom or if they share needles during drug use.
- The virus can be passed from a mother to her baby or when mother's breastfeed their babies if the infants haven't been immunized for the Hepatitis B virus.
- Hepatitis B can also be spread by sharing razors or toothbrushes with an infected person.
- Hepatitis B is NOT spread by hugging, sneezing, sharing eating utensils or restroom facilities.

1/ ECHO TV Show # 411& #412 / "Hepatitis B" / Sponsored by ECHO with support from the MN Dept. of Health and the March of Dimes (All rights reserved, May 2008).

2. What are the symptoms of Hepatitis B?

Sample Answer:

Acute
(Short term) { • The Hepatitis B virus can cause short-term illness with symptoms including loss of appetite, diarrhea and vomiting, feeling tired, jaundice (yellow skin or eyes), and pain in the muscles, joints and stomach.

Chronic
(Long term) { • Hepatitis B can also cause long-term or chronic illness that can cause liver damage (cirrhosis of the liver), liver cancer or death.

- However, about half of the adults with Hepatitis B don't realize they have the virus because the symptoms aren't always noticeable. And 90% of infected children reveal no symptoms of Hepatitis B.
- If the Hepatitis B virus stays in your system longer than six months, short term Hepatitis B can develop into chronic or a life long infection.
- People who are infected can spread the virus to others. That's why it's important to get tested for Hepatitis B so you can treat it and keep it from spreading.

3. Who is most at risk for Hepatitis B?

Sample Answer:

- Health care workers or people living with people living or treating patients with Hepatitis B.
- People who were born in or have lived in countries where Hepatitis B is more common or in countries that do not have vaccine available to keep babies and children from getting the virus.
- If you or your family member is infected you should talk with your doctor about having those who live in your household tested and vaccinated.
- Newborns and young children who have not been vaccinated to keep from getting Hepatitis B are at high risk for getting hepatitis B from those already carrying the virus.

4. How do I know if I have Hepatitis B?

Sample Answer:

- The only way to know if you have Hepatitis B is to get tested. Many times the symptoms don't present themselves in people infected with the virus but a simple blood test will show whether or not you have Hepatitis B.
- Your healthcare provider will test your blood to see if you have been infected with the virus. It is important that you return to the clinic to get your test results, and that you understand what they mean before you leave.

5. What is the treatment for Hepatitis B?

Sample Answer:

- There is no cure for Hepatitis B but there are medications that can help treat the symptoms that make you feel sick and help your liver stay healthy.
- Your doctor can talk with you about what is best for you. Not every person who has Hepatitis B will need the medications.
- Pregnant women with hepatitis B should make sure to see a doctor while they are pregnant because there are medications that both mother and baby will need.

6. How can a person protect themselves from getting Hepatitis B?

Sample Answer:

- Fortunately Hepatitis B virus can be prevented by getting a very safe and effective vaccine which requires a series of 3 or 4 shots (inoculations).
- All babies should be given the vaccine when they are born to prevent them from becoming infected with the hepatitis B virus.
- The hepatitis B vaccine cannot give someone the virus.
- Safer sex and drug use practices.

7. Who should get vaccinated?

Sample Answer:

- All adults and children should be vaccinated for Hepatitis B, especially people most at risk or those who suspect they may have been exposed to the Hepatitis B virus.
- All young children should get their first dose of vaccine at birth and should have completed the vaccine series by 15 months.
- Children and youth through 18 years of age who did not get the vaccine when they were younger should also be vaccinated.

8. What are the most important things someone with Hepatitis B should know?

Sample Answer:

- While Hepatitis B is a serious and life-threatening disease, many people learn to live with the virus and enjoy normal lives.
- There are many things you can do to take care of your body if you have Hepatitis B such as eating healthy foods, drinking a lot of water and exercising to help keep your liver strong.
- It is very important that you do not drink alcohol, because it is very damaging to the liver.
- Surround yourself with friends and family who are caring and supportive.
- Protect yourself from becoming infected with other forms of Hepatitis, such as Hepatitis A and Hepatitis C, because having more than one form of liver disease is very difficult for the body.

9. What do I need to know if I live with someone who has Hepatitis B?

Sample Answer:

- People who have Hepatitis B need support and friendship from people who care and understand.
- It is important to remember that you cannot tell if someone has Hepatitis B just by looking at them.
- Protect yourself by being vaccinated against Hepatitis B and understanding the ways in which the disease is spread and treated.

10. Is there anything else you would like to share about this topic today?

Sample Answer:

- Because this show reaches people who travel abroad and may live and work in the United States, it's important to note the areas where Chronic Hepatitis B infection is prevalent.
 - Africa; Southeast Asia, including China, Korea, Indonesia, and the Philippines; the Middle East, except Israel; South and Western Pacific islands; and parts of the Caribbean (Haiti and the Dominican Republic). [MAP]