

## ASK A DOCTOR

**Question:** I keep hearing about the Hepatitis B vaccine. What is hepatitis B and do I need the vaccine?

**Answer:** Hepatitis B is a serious infection caused by the hepatitis B virus and can affect anyone. It can be prevented by vaccination. It affects over 200,000 people in the United States every year. More than 11,000 people are hospitalized annually because of hepatitis B. One out of 20 people will get hepatitis.

Symptoms of hepatitis B can include fever, right upper quadrant pain and chalky looking stools. It is usually spread by blood transfusions, contaminated needles and sexual contact. Your risk is higher if you:

- Have sex with someone infected with HBV
- Have sex with more than one partner
- Are a male and have sex with a male
- Have a job that involves contact with human blood
- Shoot drugs
- Have hemophilia
- Travel to areas where hepatitis B is common.

There is no cure for hepatitis B. The hepatitis B vaccine is the best protection against HBV. Three doses are needed for complete protection.

The hepatitis B vaccine is not required by the college but recommended. It is available at the Student Health Center for \$16.00 (age 19 and under) and \$26.00 (over 19).

For more information contact: The Center for Disease Control and Protection at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/b/faqb/htm>

Information obtained from WebMD.com