

THE ADVISOR

MONTHLY COMPLIANCE COMMUNICATOR

Protecting Healthcare Workers: The Impact and Implementation of the Hepatitis B Vaccine

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis B is a virus that can be easily prevented by the Hepatitis B vaccine. There has been a 98% occupational transmission decline of Hepatitis B since the vaccine has been available. Most who receive the vaccine will develop immunity to the Hepatitis B virus. Those who do not develop immunity are non-responders and are susceptible to contracting Hepatitis B virus. Non-Responders to the vaccine should receive education about their increased risk to contract the virus.

Hepatitis B is spread by exposure to infected blood and body fluids. Exposure can happen in different ways. For Healthcare workers, the most common way of exposure is through needlesticks and sharp instruments. Another way would be poor infection control in healthcare facilities. The Hepatitis B virus can survive outside the body and on surfaces for seven days. The incubation period of Hepatitis B is 30-180 days. Symptoms of Hepatitis B include joint pain, abdominal pain, joint swelling, dark urine and yellowing of the eyes. Chronic cases can lead to liver failure, cancer, or scarring.

OSHA requires that employers offer the Hepatitis B vaccine to employees who have a reasonable expectation of being exposed to blood or body fluids on the job. Employers shall ensure that all occupationally exposed workers be educated about the vaccine series. The education shall include information on the safety, efficacy, method of administration, and benefits of the vaccine. The vaccination should be made available at no cost to the employee, after the employee has received training and within 10 working days of initial assignment unless the employee has previously received the complete Hepatitis B vaccination series, antibody testing has revealed that the employee is immune, or the vaccine is contraindicated for medical reasons. The vaccine should be administered according to the current recommendations of the US Public Health Service. To ensure immunity, the entire vaccination series should be given according to these recommendations.

Newsletter Content

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