FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE HEPATITIS B VACCINATION

1. What is Hepatitis B?
2. Which employees are covered by OSHA’s standard to offer the vaccine series?
3. What is the *Exposure Control Handbook*?
4. What if an employee’s position title is classified as a low risk, but almost daily we assign them additional responsibilities of resident direct care, laundry services, or apartment housekeeping that places them at risk for exposure to blood or other potentially infectious material?
5. Who will administer the vaccine and how is it administered?
6. Is it safe to vaccinate during pregnancy?
7. If an employee indicates they had one dose of Hepatitis B vaccine 4 months ago, should the series be restarted?
8. How long does the Hepatitis B virus survive outside the body?
9. What if an employee cannot remember how many doses of the vaccine they have had or how long ago they had their injections?
10. If an employee has the entire series of Hepatitis B vaccine, are they completely protected from acquiring the virus?
11. Following today’s current immunization standards, who is automatically receiving the Hepatitis B vaccine?
FAQ’s
HEPATITIS B VACCINATION

1. What is Hepatitis B?

ANSWER: A serious disease that affects the liver. The virus is spread through contact with blood or other body fluids of an infected person.

2. Which employees are covered by OSHA’s standard to offer the vaccine series?

ANSWER: We have conducted an analysis of all tasks performed by each position within our workforce. All employees who are listed in the Exposure Control Handbook as a medium or high risk should be offered the Hepatitis B vaccination series. These positions involve tasks that on a daily basis have a potential for exposure to blood or other potentially
infectious material, such as body fluids visibly contaminated with blood, vaginal secretions, semen, to our employees. These positions include: Director of Health Services, Medication Aides, Caregivers, Housekeeping and Laundry Staff, and Maintenance.

3. What is the Exposure Control Handbook?
   
   ANSWER: It is the Community’s written program that outlines the protective measures the employer will take to eliminate or minimize staff’s exposure to blood and other potentially infectious material. The manual should be reviewed annually to determine if any changes in the community have taken place that would make the program outdated, such as, the use of new products (syringes, hazardous material containers) or policies and procedures. This manual must be easily accessible to all employees.

4. What if an employee’s position title is classified as a low risk, but almost daily we assign them additional responsibilities of resident direct care, laundry services, or apartment housekeeping that places them at risk for exposure to blood or other potentially infectious material?

   ANSWER: You will either have to offer the employee the Hepatitis B series or remove these tasks from their responsibilities.

5. Who will administer the vaccine and how is it administered?

   ANSWER: The Registered Nurse in your community is the only staff member that can legally administer the injections. We have established an agreement with your community pharmacy to provide the vaccine. A licensed physician has provided the pharmacy with a “standing order”, allowing the pharmacy to dispense the vaccine.

   The vaccine is injected into the deltoid (shoulder) muscle.

6. Is it safe to vaccinate during pregnancy?

   ANSWER: Yes. Data indicates no apparent risk to developing fetus.

7. If an employee indicates they had one dose of Hepatitis B vaccine 4 months ago, should the series be restarted?

   ANSWER: NO. The vaccine series should not be restarted when doses are delayed; instead, start the series wherever they left off. The employee should receive the second dose now and the third dose, 21 weeks later.

   **Timing Rule between Doses:**
   The first shot should be given with 10 days from the time the employee accepts the series.
   The second shot should be given 1 month after the first.
   The third shot should be given 5 months after the second shot.
8. How long does the Hepatitis B virus survive outside the body?

**ANSWER:** Hepatitis B virus can survive outside the body at least 7 days. During that time, the virus can still cause infection if it enters the body of a person who is not infected. Our communities should be using the proper chemicals that can destroy the virus on surfaces.

9. What if an employee cannot remember how many doses of the vaccine they have had or how long ago they had their injections?

**ANSWER:** The individual can (at their own expense) have a blood test performed that will detect the Hepatitis B Surface Antibody (anti-HBs). If this antibody is present it means that they are protected or immune from getting the Hepatitis B virus.

10. If an employee has the entire series of Hepatitis B vaccine, are they completely protected from acquiring the virus?

**ANSWER:** No. The vaccine is very effective at preventing Hepatitis B virus infection. It is greater than 90% effective at preventing the virus infection. Although rare, some individuals are considered “non-responders” to Hepatitis B vaccination. All employees should practice prevention techniques by following Universal Precautions, and using their Personal Protective Equipment and conducting frequent hand washing.

11. Following today’s current immunization standards, who is automatically receiving the Hepatitis B vaccine?

**ANSWER:** Most states require the vaccine starting at birth and completing the vaccine series by 6-18 months of age. This means many of your younger employees, under the age of ___, should try to obtain or research their immunization records, since they probably already have been vaccinated.