The Asian Liver Center at Stanford University

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Facts and Figures: Hepatitis B and Liver Cancer

What is hepatitis B and why is it important?

- Hepatitis B is a serious viral infection that can lead to premature death from liver cancer or liver failure.
- 350 million people have chronic (life-long) hepatitis B (*compared with 33 million living with HIV/AIDS worldwide*).
- 60-80% of all primary liver cancer cases are caused by hepatitis B.
- Without treatment, 1 in 4 people with chronic hepatitis B infection will die of liver cancer or liver failure.
- Hepatitis B takes about 700,000 lives each year; one life every 30 seconds.

Why should all Asians be tested and vaccinated?

- Over 76% of people chronically infected with hepatitis B live in Asia (over 270 million people).
- More people in China die from hepatitis B (263,000-300,000 deaths/yr) than HIV/AIDS (39,000 deaths/yr), tuberculosis (200,000 deaths/yr) and malaria (37 deaths/yr) combined.
- In the U.S., an estimated 1.4 million people are living with chronic hepatitis B and over 60% are API.
- As many as 1 in 12 Asian Americans has chronic hepatitis B compared with 1 in 1,000 Caucasian Americans.
- Many Asians are infected at birth or during early childhood and are unaware of their infection because they show no signs or symptoms.
- Doctors do not routinely test for hepatitis B infection, so over half are not even aware they have been infected.

How does it spread?

- Hepatitis B is mainly transmitted in three ways: Birth, Blood and Sex
  (ie. from an infected mother to her child at birth, direct contact with contaminated blood – sharing toothbrushes, razors, needles for tattoos/piercing, or unprotected sex).
- Hepatitis B is **not** spread through air, food, water, breastfeeding, casual contact, kissing, hugging, coughing, sneezing, and sharing eating utensils or drinking glasses.

What can you do?

- **Get tested** for the hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg).
- If you are not infected, **get vaccinated** (3 shots over 6 months).
- The hepatitis B vaccine is so effective in preventing hepatitis B and liver cancer that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization called it the first "anti-cancer vaccine."
- **Get treatment** – if you are infected, see your doctor or a liver specialist for routine monitoring and treatment, if appropriate. There are safe and effective medications to reduce liver damage and decrease the risk of liver cancer.
- **Help promote awareness in your community**. Join the Jade Ribbon Campaign.