

# Hepatitis B:

## The Underestimated STD

What is the fastest spreading STD in the U.S.? Guess again.



By Jennie Schoeppe

With AIDS dominating the headlines, it is easy to forget about other STDs. Although the danger of HIV is indisputable, Hepatitis B is another incurable virus becoming more prevalent in our country, and has several negative health consequences. While rates of Hepatitis B in the U.S. are relatively low compared with other countries, it is the fastest growing STD in the U.S., and is 100 times more infectious than HIV. Three hundred thousand people are infected annually.

The Hepatitis B virus (HBV) infects the body and replicates in the liver causing inflammation and dysfunction. The immune system of many people will fight it off. Some, however, will develop chronic HBV infection and 5-10% become carriers, experiencing no symptoms but potentially infecting others. The American College Health Association points out that those with chronic infection experience a wide range of symptoms including: nausea, abdominal and joint pain, jaundice (a yellowing of the eyes and skin), dark urine, fever, fatigue and sometimes extreme exhaustion. These people can go on to develop liver disease of which 4000-5000 die annually. Carriers, although they may not be aware they have the virus, can develop cirrhosis of the liver and have a risk 200 times the normal population's for developing liver cancer.

Hepatitis B is primarily a sexually transmitted disease, contracted through vaginal, anal or oral sex. It is also spread by contact with infected blood (through cuts, mucous membranes, sores, sharing needles), or bodily fluids. Unlike HIV, HBV is also spread through saliva, food, and through close household contact such as the sharing of razors and toothbrushes.

### Who is at risk?

Of the 300,000 infected each year, 90% are young adults. High risk behaviors include: sexual activity (whether hetero, homo, or bisexual) household contacts with carriers, and traveling to the disease endemic areas of: Africa, Alaska, Brazil, Northern Canada, Pacific islands, SE Asia, and Southern Greenland. Among these behaviors the single largest high risk activity is sexual activity among heterosexual college students. This means Hepatitis B is a real and prevalent threat on college campuses. The greater risk is partly due to this group's tendency to have unprotected sex and have more than one partner in six months. Like other STDs, risk increases with each additional sex partner as well.

### The protective vaccine

Unlike many STDs there is no cure for Hepatitis B. The only treatment for infected individuals is rest and a high protein/carbohydrate diet to repair liver cell damage and protect the liver. Fortunately, there is a vaccine. The series of three shots (each costing \$36) is available at the Student Health Center. The complete series is 85-95% effective and lasts up to ten years.

Both the Centers for Disease Control and the American College Health Association recommend vaccination for adolescents and college aged students as well as students immigrating from endemic areas. The Health Center's Travel Clinic encourages students preparing to study internationally to be vaccinated. Health care officials hope that vaccination will help control the rapid spread of Hepatitis B in our country.

You can protect yourself and those around you by always using condoms and following safer sex practices, but especially by getting vaccinated.

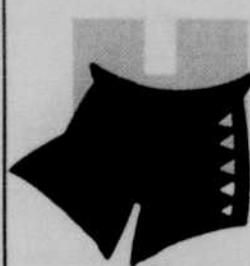
The staff at the travel clinic (area C) is available to answer any questions regarding the vaccine and get you started on your vaccination series today! (You can reach the travel clinic by calling the Student Health Center, 346-4432.)

If you have questions or concerns about Hepatitis B or other STDs visit the Health Education Room (346-4456) of the Health Center (around the corner from the pharmacy).

## Well Now Staff

**Director of Health Education:** Joanne Frank, M.S.  
**Peer Health Educator Coordinator:** Annie Dochnahl, M.S.  
**Nutrition & HIV Counselor:** Kristen Olmos, R.D.  
**Cholesterol Educator:** Tatiana Isotov  
**Editor of Well Now:** Axel Jansen  
**Outreach Coordinator:** Naghmeh Moshtael  
**Salesperson:** Kelsey Weckell  
**Production:** Dehli McCobb  
**Co-Editors:** Jeff Conant and Erin Teruya  
**Second Term Peer Health Educators:** Kristen Koenig, Andrew Winge, Caroline Henry, Natalie Thamert, Megan Foster, Erin Teruya, Diane Wells, Heather Branlund, Jeff Conant, Kelsey Lockhart, Jennie Schoeppe, Lisa Petersen  
**First Term Peer Health Educators:** Ken Cline, Kim

Creswick, Joanna Heath, Kari Fehner, Frank Lee, Lindall McIntyre, Mark Sacks, Romila Tandigan, Shelby Seale  
 The *Well Now* is a newsletter sponsored by the Student Health Center and produced by the Health Education staff with the assistance of the *Oregon Daily Emerald*.



## Health Shorts

### Understanding the signals

What kind of dating behavior indicates interest in sexual intercourse to college students? A recent study from NASPA Journal (winter 1995) entitled "Perceptions of Dating Behaviors and Reasons Offered to Justify Date Rape" asked nearly 500 college students about their ideas concerning dating and rape. The findings are useful in light of other research showing a link between perceived interest in sexual intercourse and risk for date rape. Acquaintance and date rape are the most common forms of rape. If college students understand what signals are generally understood as inviting sexual intercourse, the likelihood of miscommunication and date rape can be avoided.

Both men and women were asked what kind of behavior indicated women's interest in sexual intercourse. Most frequently students referred to flirting and talking seductively, followed by initiating foreplay, wearing seductive clothing, and verbally asking for sex.

Interviewers asked the same group what kind of women's behavior

would lead men to think that forcing sexual intercourse was justified. Students again referred to flirting and talking seductively as the prime indicator. The second highest number of students argued that nothing justified rape. According to some students, a woman's wearing seductive clothing and meeting at his or her home for the date also indicated to men that they were justified in forcing a woman in having sexual intercourse.

The authors conclude that the perceptions of men and women are quite similar in terms of the meanings of specific dating behaviors. Regardless of the ethical implications of the findings, this study suggests that a woman's engaging in these dating behaviors when not actually desiring sexual intercourse may have negative consequences. This is not to suggest that men are not responsible for their behavior. Students of both sexes might have to reflect on their own understanding of what constitutes consent, and what does not.

## Soon on campus: International Student Health Conference

"Health Challenges of the 1990s: International Student Perspective" is the title of a conference which will address a host of issue on friendship, intimacy and health such as, among others, healthy intimacy and sexuality, the importance of cross-cultural communication, health risks, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, leadership and volunteering opportunities.

The conference will take place right here on campus: May 12-13, 1995, Erb Memorial Union, University of Oregon. Students and experts will meet in various formats, including plenary sessions, breakout sessions, student panels and a mini health fair.

The Conference will feature two keynote speakers, Milton Tam - from Program for Appropriate Technology in Health, Seattle, and Donna Reed - from People of Color Against AIDS Network, Seattle.



## Look into Books

Brenda J. Ponichtera, *Quick and Healthy Meals* (ScaleDown: The Dulles, Oregon, 1991)  
 Evelyn Tribble, *Eating on the Run* (Leisure Press: Champaign, Illinois, 1992)  
 John Gray, *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* (Harper: New York, 1992)

## Resources

### CONFLICT RESOLUTION

University Counseling Center  
 13th Street at Agate 346-3227  
 UO Crisis Center Hotline 346-4488 24 hours a day  
 Sexual Assault Support Services 484-9795  
 U of O Mediation Program  
 EMU Room 318 346-4240  
 Office of Student Advocacy  
 EMU Room 318 346-3722  
 Women's Resource and Referral Center  
 EMU Suite 3 346-4095

### ACADEMIC CONCERNS

Office of Academic Advising and Student Services  
 164 Oregon Hall 346-3211  
 Career Planning and Placement  
 244 Hendricks Hall 346-3235  
 Center for Academic Learning Services  
 68 PLC 346-3226

### HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION CONCERNS

Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity  
 474 Oregon Hall 346-3123  
 Office of Public Safety Straub Hall 346-5444  
 Student Conduct Coordinator  
 364 Oregon Hall 346-1141

Coordinator Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Concerns  
 346-1142

Lesbian Gay Bisexual Alliance 346-3360

### FINANCIAL CONCERNS

Office of Student Financial Aid  
 260 Oregon Hall 346-3221  
 Student Employment Office  
 12 Hendricks Hall 346-3214

### PHYSICAL AILMENTS

Student Health Center 13th Street at Agate 346-4441

### HEALTH INFORMATION

Health Education Program 346-4456  
 Physical Therapy and Sports Medicine 346-4101  
 Slocum Sports  
 Medicine Lab 346-4107

### SPORTS AND ACTIVITIES

Club Sports 346-3733  
 Recreation and  
 Intramurals 346-4113

