Hepatitis

Continued from Page 1

of appetite, fatigue, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, abdominal pain, dark urine and jaundice or yellow coloring of the skin and eyes. Unlike hepatitis A, the symptoms appear more gradually, and it is possible for a person to remain infected for a lifetime.

The number of hepatitis B reported cases are up from 34 in 1997 to 52 as of Sept. 30 for Lane County. The Lane County Health and Human Services attributes this rise to an increasing number of infected patients using intravenous drugs

Approximately 300,000 Americans contract hepatitis B each year, according to the American

Social Health Association. Of all the reported cases, approximately 75 percent of the people are between 15-39 years-old, according to the ACHA. Because there is no cure for HBV, the health center recommends the threeshot immunization, which takes place during a six-month period. For students ages 19 and under, the shots are \$6 apiece, and for students 20 and over, they are \$31 each.

It is such a serious disease. It is like, 'Why wouldn't you get it?"" said Sharon Harbert, registered nurse at the Student Health

The ACHA recommends all college students get the hepatitis

B vaccination. This virus is so prevalent that it is standard regulation that all newborns be immunized before they leave the hospital, Harbert said.

Many people are at risk and are unaware of it. One-third of those infected have no identifiable risk factors and do not know how they contracted hepatitis B, according to the ACHA.

Practicing safer sex, not using injectable drugs and avoiding exposure to blood or other bodily fluids will reduce your risk.

Hepatitis A also has serious implications for students. The hepatitis A virus is a highly contagious virus that can be contracted by eating or drinking something that has been contaminated with stool or blood of an infected person. As of Sept. 30, there were 91 reported case in Lane County for 1998, almost double from the 48 in 1997.

Symptoms of hepatitis A are similar to those of B; however, their onset is slightly different. Typically, the older the patient, the more sever the symptoms. Symptoms may last about four weeks, but up to 20 percent of the affected persons show symptoms for up to 15 months and some may need to be hospitalized, according to the health cen-

Hepatitis A can cause severe liver damage and possibly death. The percentages of deaths are seven times greater in people older than 40 years and younger than 14 years, according to 1989 data provided from the health

HAV used to be a concern primarily for people traveling to under-developed areas of the world, where it is endemic. However, there have been a high number of cases reported in the Eugene area, said Dr. Gerald Fleischli. health center director.

According to the Lane County Health and Human Services Division, the high number of cases of HAV is primarily attributed to the high number of transient persons in the population. Quite frequently, transmission of the virus is more frequent because of low levels of cleanliness. However, the number of hepatitis A cases are not confined to the Lane County area.

When it comes to the number of reported cases of HAV, "Oregon is consistently above the national average," said Dr. William E. Keene, epidemioligist of the Oregon Health Division. He also said the West Coast in general is also higher than the average. Being in an area of high incidence puts the population at a greater risk of contracting the virus, Keene said, but there is no determined reason why Oregon and the West Coast have such a high number of cases.

For protection, there are two vaccines available for hepatitis A, which students can get at the health center. In addition to get-

Risky behaviors

Hepatitis A

Traveling to developing countries where hepatitis A virus is common Eating contaminated food either prepared by an infected person or using contaminated water

Having vaginal, oral or anal sexual contact with an infected person Using silverware, cups or glasses that an infected person has touched

with unwashed hands Making contact with stool of an infected person and neglecting to

wash your hands Sharing food with an infected person or drinking water contaminated with sewage

Hepatitis B

Having unprotected sex Having multiple sex partners Sharing needles

Potentially from having contact with needles for tattoos, acupuncture or piercing

Having close, frequent contact with the blood, semen, vaginal secretions or saliva of infected per-

Where to call

University Student Health Center: 346-4441

Sacred Heart Medical Center: 686-7300

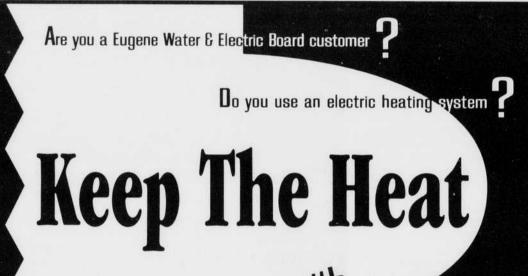
SOURCE: University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Health Center

ting vaccinated, other steps may help to slightly reduce the risk of contracting HAV.

Cleanliness, such as washing hands regularly to prevent passing fecal matter, is recommended by the Oregon Health Division. The health center recommends that students contact them when making plans to travel outside the United States.

According to the health center and other experts, vaccination is the safest way for students to protect themselves from both virus-

Sarah Skidmore covers the health center, counseling center, alumni association, AAA school and the business school for the Emerald. She can be reached via e-mail at slskidm@gladstone.uoregon.edu.



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