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**2017 02.07 Health Matters**

**Hepatitis A, B and C**

**Joe**

**This is Health Matters, reporting on hepatitis.**

**Kristen**

**Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver. It can be caused by autoimmune diseases. And by drugs, alcohol and chemicals.**

**Joe**

**But viruses are the most common cause of hepatitis. When doctors diagnose a liver inflammation as viral hepatitis, they are referring to the family of viruses that primarily attack the liver.**

**Taushona**

**Hepatitis A, hepatitis B and hepatitis C are the most common viruses. But there’s also hepatitis D, E, F and G.**

**Kristen**

**Once a hepatitis virus starts multiplying, it can cause considerable damage to liver function. Which is why early identification is so important. The trouble is, people can harbor a hepatitis virus and not realize it.**

**Taushona**

**Wouldn’t that mean the hepatitis infection isn’t that serious?**

**Joe**

**It depends upon which type it is. Hepatitis A, which is the most**

**common, causes only a mild illness. Many people never realize they’re**

**sick at all. But hepatitis A is highly contagious and can spread from**

**person to person in many different settings. Hepatitis A almost always**

**goes away on its own and does not cause long term liver damage.**

**Kristen**

**Hepatitis A generally spreads through contaminated food or water. Even a tiny amount of infected stool can contaminate food handled by people with the virus who didn’t wash their hands after using the bathroom. Hepatitis A outbreaks are also caused by raw shellfish, fruits, vegetables and undercooked foods. Sometimes there are Hepatitis A outbreaks in daycare centers from employees not careful about washing their hands after changing diapers.**

**Taushona**

**People living in seriously substandard conditions are at risk for hepatitis A. And traveling in countries with high infection rates poses a risk. You can check the Centers for Disease Control travel advisories. And check with a doctor about necessary precautions.**

**Joe**

**Hepatitis B also causes mild symptoms for a short time. And many adults who contract hepatitis B get better on their own as well. But some people are not able to clear the virus. A person carrying a long-term hepatitis B infection can wind up with liver damage, liver cancer or liver failure.**

**Kristen**

**An infected mother can pass the Hepatitis B virus to her baby during childbirth. When infants contract hepatitis B, they have a 90% chance of carrying it for life.**

**Taushona**

**Hepatitis B is spread by coming into contact with the blood or body fluids of an infected person. Anyone can get hepatitis B, but most often it is spread through unprotected sex. It is also transmitted by sharing an infected person’s needles, razors or toothbrush. It is not spread by sharing food, or by coughing or hugging. People who inject illegal drugs or who have multiple sex partners are at higher risk for hepatitis B.**

**Kristen**

**The risk profile is similar for hepatitis C, as it too spreads through infected blood. HIV poses a risk for Hepatitis C. As does sharing needles. Tattoos and body piercing done with infected needles can transmit the virus. Only 25% of people infected with hepatitis C defeat this virus short term. The rest carry it long term. Chronic hepatitis C causes serious complications, including liver cancer and liver failure.**

**Taushona**

**The good news is that there are effective treatments for the B and C viruses.**

**Joe**

**The bad news is that people can walk around for years infected with hepatitis B or C and not know it because there aren’t any symptoms. That’s why being tested for hepatitis is important for anyone with the risk factors we’ve outlined. Particularly people who are --or were -- injected drug users. And people who have had multiple sex partners.**

**Kristen**

**Not everyone infected with viral hepatitis is symptom free. It can cause fatigue, mild fever, loss of appetite, muscle or joint aches, nausea, vomiting and belly pain. Dark urine, jaundice, itchiness, feelings of stupor and internal bleeding are also symptoms.**

**Kristen**

**A blood test can determine whether you have viral hepatitis, and what kind you have. If you feel you were or are currently at risk, a blood test is highly recommended. If you test positive, your doctor will discuss treatment options and preventive measures for the people who live with you.**

**Joe**

**Health Matters is a production of KIDE Hoopa CA.  Produced and written by Cynthia Poten. Engineered by Joseph Orozco.  Our readers were Kristen Marshall, Taushona Moon and Joseph Orozco.  For this audio and more information, visit our download area at  www.kidefm.org. Thank you for listening. Your health adds to the health of our community.**