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HBV Vaccination of HCWs: Report Card

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Hepatitis B virus (HBV) vaccine coverage, disease trends, and the need for booster doses after HBV vaccination of adults has been the subject of intense study during the 15 years of the vaccine's availability. The CDC recently published the results of a study of vaccination coverage of health care workers (HCWs) in a sample of employees from 113 randomly selected US hospitals. The number of HBV infections among HCWs and the general US population for 1983 through 1985 was estimated from national surveillance data. Studies on long-term protection after HBV of adults also were reviewed.

The results indicated that a total of 2,532 of 2,837 (90%) HCWs were eli-

gible to receive HBV vaccine, and 66.5% of them had received three doses of the vaccine.

Vaccination coverage was highest (75%) for personnel with frequent exposure to infectious body fluids (phlebotomists, laboratory personnel, and nursing staff) and lowest (45%) for employees at low risk for exposure (dietary and clerical). The number of HBV infections among HCWs declined from 17,000 in 1983 to 400 in 1995. The 95% decline in incidence observed among HCWs is 1.5-fold greater than the reduction in incidence in the general US population.

Increased vaccination coverage was higher in hospitals that provided incentives, used employee performance measures (eg, supervisor notification if an employee refused vaccination, imposed sanctions for refus-

ing vaccination, required vaccination as a condition of employment, sent reminder notices when vaccine doses were due), and in hospitals that used a computerized tracking system.

A review of longitudinal studies on the long-term protection demonstrate that vaccine-induced protection persists at least 11 years, even when titers of antibody to hepatitis B surface antigen decline below detectable levels, and booster doses are not needed for individuals whose immune status is normal or who have responded to vaccination.

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