

HEALTH • HEPATITIS B IMMUNIZATION

State offers teens free hepatitis B shots

By Kevin Dayton

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The state Department of Health is offering free immunization clinics for teens during the winter school break to stop the spread of hepatitis B among Hawaii's youth.

Hawaii's rate of infection for hepatitis B has been as high as six times the national average. The disease can cause serious illness, and 5 to 10 percent of infected people suffer chronic liver disease that includes cirrhosis and liver cancer.

Symptoms of hepatitis B include jaundice, fatigue, ab-

dominal pain, loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting.

Hepatitis B is usually spread through sex or shared needles, but it can also be passed among people who share toothbrushes, razors or earrings.

The state has been working with businesses, private foundations and others for more than a year to encourage young people 12 to 18 years old to get the series of three vaccinations. The shots are given over six months to build up an immunity to the disease.

More 200,000 doses of the vaccine have been distributed since the program began Sept. 1, 1997.

The vaccinations are available at the following locations and times:

Oahu

■ Diamond Head Health Clinic: tomorrow and Dec. 30, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

■ Wahiawa Public Health Nursing Office: today and Dec. 29, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

■ Waianae Public Health Nursing Office: today, 1-3 p.m.

■ Waipahu Civic Center: Dec. 28, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

■ Lanakila Health Center: Dec. 28, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Big Island

■ Waiakea Health Center: tomorrow, 2-4 p.m.

■ Ka'u Public Health Nursing Office (Naalehu Civic Center): today, 12:30-3:30 p.m., or call 939-2400 for an appointment.

■ Kona Health Center: Dec. 28, call 322-9331 for an appointment.

MauI

■ Wailuku Health Center: tomorrow and Dec. 30, 12:30-2:30 p.m.

Lanai

■ Public Health Nursing Office: tomorrow, 1-2 p.m., or call 565-6622 for additional dates and times.

On Molokai, call 553-3663 for information. On Kauai, call 241-3387 for information.