

Hepatitis B Vaccine Might Not Be 100% Protective

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A friend of mine who recently traveled to Asian country for business called me and complained of fatigue, vague mild upper right-sided abdominal discomfort and jaundice. He was seen in my clinic and lab work showed he had Pre-s mutant hepatitis B viral infection and hepatitis. He did not understand why he could have viral hepatitis B infection because he had full dosage of HBV vaccination during childhood. He should be protected from getting HBV infection.

I sat down and explained to him at length and finally he understood. The HBV vaccination induces protective antibody against HBV surface antigen. He should be protected if HBV surface antigen is wild type or intact. But he will not be protected if surface antigen is altered or mutated like Pre –s mutant of HBV virus. There are several different viral mutants of HBV virus, which are usually seen in highly epidemic regions like Asia and Middle East. You have to take general precaution to protect yourself from infection even though you already have vaccination.

If you have any questions about viral hepatitis, abnormal liver enzymes, jaundice or any liver diseases, please contact Dr. Jeff Ye, North Atlanta Medical and Digestive Care at 770-346-0900. We can help!