

Kadaga calls for mass Hepatitis B screening

By Paul Kiwuuwa

Parliament Speaker Rebecca Kadaga has called on the public countrywide to test for Hepatitis B.

"The Parliament, in conjunction with the health ministry, encourages members of the public to test and get to know their status. It is important to protect your health," Kadaga said.

Hepatitis is a group of viral infectious diseases. The five known hepatitis viruses are types A, B, C, D and E. Hepatitis B and C cause acute and chronic liver disease and lead to death, according to the World Health Organisation.

Kadaga said those who test negative for Hepatitis B should seek vaccination to protect themselves against acquiring the disease. Vaccination is done in three doses: at the beginning, after one month and six months after the first dose.

According to information from the health ministry, some of those who test positive might need to be put on treatment, while others will just be observed and advised to do regular tests.

Kadaga made the call at the opening of the Parliament Health Week activities, under the theme for last year's World Aids Day, *Right to health*. The outreach camp was flagged off by Kadaga. The Health Week is part of Parliament's outreach programmes of identifying itself with Ugandans.

The services include Hepatitis

Kadaga hugs Reach Out Mbuya parish HIV/AIDS Initiative children after giving them an award for their efforts in the fight against HIV/AIDS. This was during the start of Parliament Health Week at Parliament yesterday.

Photo by Maria Wamala



B screening, voluntary counselling and testing, cancer screening, voluntary male circumcision, blood donation, eye and ear check-ups, general health checks, aerobic activities, sickle cell screening, heart-related problems, high and low blood pressure screening.

Hepatitis B prevalence

According to the Ministry of Health, Uganda is one of the countries most affected by

Hepatitis B.

Statistics from the ministry show that about 3.5 million (10% of the population) are living with chronic Hepatitis B infection. The highest infection rates are in Karamoja (23.9%), northern Uganda (20.7%), West Nile (18.5%), and western (10.0%), central (6%) and southwestern (3.8%). Liver cancer (one of the complications of Hepatitis B) accounts for 2% of admissions at the Uganda

Cancer Institute.

Mode of transmission

Contact with infected blood and other body fluids, Mother-to-child transmission, especially of newborns, unsafe blood transfusion, use of unsafe sharp materials such as needles, razor blades, sexual intercourse and child-to-child (horizontal transmission), especially in high prevalence areas.