

Students sent away over Hepatitis B vaccination fees

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MASAKA. Several students of Masaka Secondary School have been sent back home after failing to pay Hepatitis B vaccination fees.

Many students, who were found loitering in Masaka Town yesterday morning, told *Daily Monitor* that the school administrators told them to go back home and bring Shs35,000 for Hepatitis B vaccination.

"We have been told to go back home and bring the money, but my mother had just cleared school fees and I am sure she doesn't have the money," a female Senior Three student said.

Her colleague, who said she is in Senior Two, said: "They [administrators] have even threatened us that we will not sit for end of term exams if we don't pay the money, but this is a promotional term and we need to concentrate and revise our books."

Hepatitis B is a viral infection that attacks the liver and can cause both acute and chronic liver disease. The virus is transmitted through contact

HEPATITIS B

Cause. Hepatitis B is a potentially life-threatening liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV). It is a major global health problem. It can cause chronic infection and puts people at high risk of death from cirrhosis and liver cancer.

Transmission. It is most commonly spread from mother to child at birth, or through horizontal transmission (exposure to infected blood). Hepatitis B is also spread through exposure to infected various body fluids, as well as through saliva, menstrual, vaginal, and seminal fluids.

with the blood or other body fluids of an infected person.

Although parents welcome the move to vaccinate their students, given that the disease has become a serious concern in the country, they said the school ought to have told them about the arrangement much earlier.

Ms Christine Nakyeyune Kafeero, one of the aggrieved parents, said besides not being notified by the school administrators, the Shs35,000 being charged per student is high.

"I have just cleared the school fees and other requirements, where do they expect me to get that money now?" Ms Kafeero wondered.

However, Mr Musa Mpungu, the Masaka SS head teacher, said they informed parents about the arrangement.

"Any parent who claims he is not aware about this arrangement has not been attending our meetings. We resolved and parents agreed to pay that fee so that students get the required vaccination to protect them against Hepatitis B," he said in a telephone interview yesterday.

He added: "After testing about 20 students and we found them positive, we decided to protect the rest by vaccinating them," Mr Mpungu said.

Masaka SS is one of the largest secondary schools in the country, with a population of more than 4,500 students.

Mr Mpungu said instead of lamenting about lack of money, parents should appreciate the school's initiative to vaccinate their children against the deadly virus.