



Viral hepatitis



**World Health
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Европейское региональное бюро

What is hepatitis?

- Hepatitis is a viral infection that causes inflammation of the liver
- There are five main types of viral hepatitis: A, B, C, D, E
- Hepatitis A and E are typically caused by ingestion of contaminated food or water
- Hepatitis B, C and D are typically caused by contact with contaminated blood or body fluids
- In particular viral hepatitis types B and C lead to chronic disease in hundreds of millions of people and, together, are the most common cause of liver cirrhosis and cancer
- About 1 million people die each year from causes related to viral hepatitis

Global burden of hepatitis B and C

- The global burden of disease due to acute hepatitis B and C, and cancer and cirrhosis of the liver, accounts for about 2.7% of all deaths. This is expected to increase further in the next two decades
- An estimated 57% of liver cirrhosis and 78% of primary liver cancer are due to hepatitis B virus (HBV) or hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection
- In total, about 2 billion people have been infected with HBV; about 600 000 people die each year due to the consequences of hepatitis B
- About 150 million people are chronically infected with HCV (about 10 times higher than HIV estimates); more than 350 000 people die each year from hepatitis C-related liver diseases

Hepatitis B and C in the WHO European Region

- Hepatitis B and C cause a high burden of disease in the WHO European Region, especially among key populations
- Only 1 in 5 persons exposed to the hepatitis B and C virus develops *acute* symptoms, but *chronic* infection is common
- Hepatitis B and C each is estimated to affect up to 2% of the population in the Region (13.3 million people living with chronic hepatitis B, 15 million with chronic hepatitis C); together, they cause over 120 000 deaths per year
- Two-thirds of infected persons live in eastern Europe and central Asia
- Co-infection of HCV and HIV is common, especially among people who inject drugs

Main transmission modes for hepatitis B, C virus

- Hepatitis B virus (HBV):

- Sexual contact
- Mother-to-child transmission
- Blood-to-blood contact by unsafe injecting practices, blood transfusion, unsterile medical equipment (HBV is an important occupational hazard for health workers)



- Hepatitis C virus (HCV):

- Blood-to-blood contact by unsafe injecting practices (main transmission mode in the WHO European Region), blood transfusion, unsterile medical equipment
- Sexual contact (less common)



HBV and HCV are many more times infective than HIV

Main prevention measures for hepatitis B and C

- Promote vaccination against hepatitis B
- Ensure needle and syringe programmes to avoid sharing injecting equipment
- Promote safe sex
- Ensure adequately sterilized medical equipment
- Promote hepatitis B and C testing and counselling services
- Raise awareness for the diseases and their transmission modes, especially among key populations



Treatment of hepatitis B and C

- Usually, acute infection with hepatitis B or C does not require treatment
- Combination antiviral therapy has been the mainstay of treatment for chronic hepatitis B and C
- Treatment remains poorly accessible and too costly for many of those in need. Also, poor response to the treatment, problems with adherence, and intolerance to the medicines result in low numbers of people on treatment
- New and effective medications are becoming available



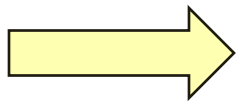
WHO response to the epidemic

- In 2010, Resolution WHA63.18 was adopted at the World Health Assembly, calling for a comprehensive approach to the prevention and control of viral hepatitis
- Recent publications:
 - Guidance on prevention of viral hepatitis B and C among people who inject drugs (2012)
 - Prevention & Control of Viral Hepatitis Infection: Framework for Global Action (2012)
- Publication being launched on World Hepatitis Day:
 - Global Hepatitis Policy Report (2013)
- Upcoming publications (expected in 2014):
 - Guidance on the surveillance of hepatitis B and C
 - Guidance on the treatment of Hepatitis C



28 July 2013


World Hepatitis Day



To increase awareness and understanding of viral hepatitis and the diseases that it causes

WHO Regional Office for Europe HIV/AIDS, STIs and Viral Hepatitis Programme

www.euro.who.int/hepatitis



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(Photo: Istock)

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver, most commonly caused by a viral infection. There are five main hepatitis viruses that cause acute

News

Hepatitis B and C infect one in fifty adults in European Region
05-08-2013

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