



Viral Hepatitis Deaths Are Increasing

Worldwide, hepatitis B and C claim 3,500 lives each day.

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According to the World Health Organization (WHO) 2024 Global Hepatitis Report, the number of lives lost due to viral hepatitis is increasing. Viral hepatitis is the second leading infectious cause of death globally—with 1.3 million deaths per year, the same as tuberculosis, a top infectious killer.

The report, released at the World Hepatitis Summit, highlights that despite better tools for diagnosis and treatment and decreasing product prices, testing and treatment coverage rates have stalled. But reaching the WHO's hepatitis elimination goal by 2030 should still be achievable, if swift actions are taken now.

New data from 187 countries show that the estimated number of deaths from viral hepatitis increased from 1.1 million in 2019 to 1.3 million in 2022. Of these, 83% were caused by hepatitis B, and 17% by hepatitis C. Every day, 3,500 people die globally due to hepatitis B and C infections.

“This report paints a troubling picture: Despite progress globally in preventing hepatitis infections, deaths are rising because far too few people with hepatitis are being diagnosed and treated,” said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, PhD. “WHO is committed to supporting countries to use all the tools at their disposal—at access prices—to save lives and turn this trend around.”

Updated WHO estimates indicate that 254 million people were living with hepatitis B and 50 million with hepatitis C in 2022. Half the burden of chronic hepatitis B and C infections is among people 30 to 54 years old, with 12% among children under 18 years of age. Men account for 58% of all cases.

New incidence estimates indicate a slight decrease compared to 2019, but the overall incidence of viral hepatitis remains high. In 2022, there were 2.2 million new infections, down from 2.5 million in 2019.

These include 1.2 million new hepatitis B infections and nearly 1 million new hepatitis C infections. More than 6,000 people are getting newly infected with viral hepatitis each day.

The revised estimates are derived from enhanced data from national prevalence surveys. They also indicate that prevention measures such as immunization and safe injections, along with the expansion of hepatitis C treatment, have contributed to reducing the incidence.

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