



# Global Hepatitis Report 2024

**For Prelims:** [World Health Organisation](#), [Hepatitis](#), [National Viral Hepatitis Control Program](#), [India's Universal Immunization Programme](#)

**For Mains:** Prevalence of Hepatitis at Global and Indian level, Challenges in tackling Hepatitis and how to achieve the global target

**Source:** [IE](#)

## Why in News?

The recently released **Global Hepatitis Report 2024** by the [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#) has highlighted **India as one of the nations facing a significant burden of viral hepatitis**, particularly Hepatitis B and C infections.

## What are the Key Findings of the Report?

- **India's Hepatitis Burden:**
  - **Prevalence in India:**
    - India is one of the countries with the highest burden of viral hepatitis.
    - India has an estimated **2.9 crore people living with Hepatitis B** infection and **0.55 crore living with Hepatitis C** infection.
    - There were over 50,000 new Hepatitis B cases and 1.4 lakh new Hepatitis C cases reported in India in 2022.
    - These viral hepatitis infections killed **1.23 lakh people in India in 2022**.
  - **Drivers of Hepatitis Infections in India:**
    - Both Hepatitis B and C infections are transmitted through various means, including mother-to-child transmission, **unsafe blood transfusions**, contact with infected blood, and **needle-sharing** among drug users.
      - Despite advancements in blood safety protocols, mother-to-child transmission remains a primary mode of infection for Hepatitis B in India.
  - **Diagnosis and Treatment Coverage:**
    - In India, only **2.4% of Hepatitis B cases and 28% of Hepatitis C cases are diagnosed**.
    - Treatment coverage is even lower, at **0% for Hepatitis B and 21% for Hepatitis C**, despite the availability of affordable generic medicines.
  - **Barriers to Improving Hepatitis Outcomes:**
    - Limited reach and utilisation of the [National Viral Hepatitis Control Program](#).
    - Need to **expand access to affordable diagnostics** and treatment services under the program.
    - Requirement to **treat all diagnosed individuals, regardless of disease stage**, to reduce health consequences and transmission.
- **Global:**
  - **Mortality Trends:**

- Viral hepatitis caused an estimated **1.3 million deaths globally in 2022, on par with tuberculosis.**
  - Hepatitis B accounted for 83% of these deaths, while hepatitis C accounted for 17%.
- The rise in mortality suggests an increase in **hepatitis-related liver cancer cases and deaths.**
- The number of new viral hepatitis infections declined from 2.5 million in 2019 to 2.2 million in 2022.
- **Prevalence:**
  - Globally, an estimated 304 million people were living with hepatitis B and C in 2022.
    - WHO estimates indicate that **254 million people lived with hepatitis B and 50 million with hepatitis C in 2022.**
    - **12% of the burden is among children**, particularly for hepatitis B.
- **Barriers to Scaling Up Testing and Treatment:**
  - Lack of funding and limited decentralisation have restricted the scaling up of testing services.
  - Many countries are still not procuring hepatitis medicines at the available generic prices, leading to high costs.
  - Patent-related barriers remain an obstacle to accessing affordable hepatitis C medicines in some countries.

## What are the Key Facts About Hepatitis?

### ▪ About:

- Hepatitis is caused by infectious viruses (viral hepatitis), and noninfectious agents, leading to a range of health problems, some of which can be fatal.
- There are **five main strains of the hepatitis virus: A, B, C, D, and E**, each with different modes of transmission, severity, geographical distribution, and prevention methods.
- Types **B and C are the most common cause of liver cirrhosis** (a condition in which the liver is scarred and permanently damaged), liver cancer, and viral hepatitis-related deaths.
- Some types of **hepatitis are preventable through vaccination**, and an estimated **4.5 million premature deaths could be prevented by 2030** through vaccination, diagnostic tests, medicines, and education campaigns.
- WHO's global hepatitis strategy aims to reduce new hepatitis infections by 90% **and deaths by 65% between 2016 and 2030.**

### ▪ Symptoms and Severity:

- Hepatitis A, B, C, D, and E can exhibit mild or no symptoms.
- Symptoms of hepatitis A, B, and C include fever, malaise, loss of appetite, diarrhoea, nausea, abdominal discomfort, dark-coloured urine, and jaundice.
  - Chronic liver infection, cirrhosis, and liver cancer can result from hepatitis A, B, and C.
- **Hepatitis D is found in people already infected with hepatitis B** and can cause a more serious infection and accelerated progression to cirrhosis. Chronic hepatitis D is rare.
- Hepatitis E symptoms include mild fever, reduced appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, **itching**, skin rash, joint pain, jaundice, dark urine, pale stools, and hepatomegaly or acute liver failure.

# Types of Hepatitis

	TRANSMISSION	PREVENTION	TREATMENT
Hepatitis A	Eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practicing good hygiene</li> <li>• Vaccine</li> </ul>	No treatment
Hepatitis B	Through contact with the blood or bodily fluids of an infected person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practicing good hygiene</li> <li>• Vaccine</li> <li>• Blood screening</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alpha interferon</li> <li>• Peginterferon</li> </ul>
Hepatitis C	Blood-to-blood contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practicing good hygiene</li> <li>• Avoid sharing needles, toothbrushes, razors or nail scissors</li> </ul>	Direct-acting antiviral drugs
Hepatitis D	Contact with infected blood (only occurs in people already infected with hepatitis B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hepatitis B vaccine</li> <li>• Avoid sharing needles, toothbrushes, razors or nail scissors</li> </ul>	Interferon
Hepatitis E	Eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practicing good hygiene</li> <li>• Avoid drinking water that has come from a potentially unsafe source</li> </ul>	No treatment

- **India's Initiatives:**
  - [National Viral Hepatitis Control Program.](#)
  - [National Health Mission.](#)
  - [India's Universal Immunization Programme \(UIP\).](#)
- **Global:**
  - [World Hepatitis Day.](#)
  - [WHO Elimination of hepatitis by 2030](#)

## Way Forward

- Treating an estimated 40 million people with hepatitis B and curing 30 million people with hepatitis C by 2026 is crucial to regain the trajectory towards elimination.
  - **Targeted efforts are required** to reach specific high-risk populations affected by viral hepatitis.
- Integrate hepatitis services into **primary healthcare settings** to improve access for individuals

across all socioeconomic backgrounds.

- Expand and improve the National Viral Hepatitis Control Program by increasing funding, broadening its scope, and enhancing coordination among stakeholders. Prioritise early diagnosis and treatment initiation through the program.

**Drishti Mains Question:**

Q.Examine the barriers hindering the scaling up of testing and treatment services for viral hepatitis in India.

**UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)**

**Prelims:**

**Q. Which one of the following statements is not correct? (2019)**

- (a) Hepatitis B virus is transmitted much like HIV.
- (b) Hepatitis B unlike Hepatitis C, does not have a vaccine.
- (c) Globally, the number of people infected with Hepatitis B and C viruses are several times more than those infected with HIV.
- (d) Some of those infected with Hepatitis B and C viruses do not show the symptoms for many years.

**Ans: (b)**

**Q. Which of the following diseases can be transmitted from one person to another through tattooing? (2013)**

1. Chikungunya
2. Hepatitis B
3. HIV-AIDS

**Select the correct answer using the codes given below:**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (b)**