

Every year in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, around 400 000 people are newly infected with hepatitis C virus. Over two thirds of those people will develop chronic hepatitis C, which is one of the main causes of liver cirrhosis and liver cancer. Around 16 million people currently have chronic hepatitis C in the Region.

On this year's World Hepatitis Day, WHO calls for new direct acting antiviral treatment that can cure hepatitis C to be made accessible to everyone who is living with chronic hepatitis C. Yet the price of one course of treatment with this new generation of hepatitis medicines can reach many thousands of dollars, which is neither affordable for individuals nor governments.

People living with hepatitis C and those at risk, including health care providers, and their civil society supporters must take an active role with their governments in stepping up the demand for treatment. Through working together and taking the lead in demanding treatment, their right to the life-saving treatment cannot be ignored.

Direct-acting antiviral agents are new medicines that can cure hepatitis C. They are game changers in hepatitis C treatment and control because:

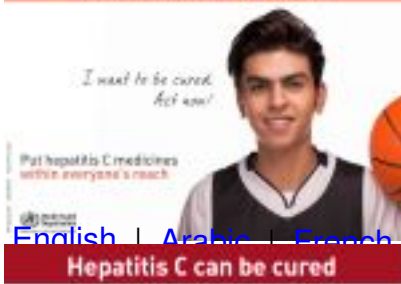
- they are taken orally
- they have fewer side-effects
- a treatment course can be completed within 12–16 weeks
- they can cure over 95% of cases.

Previous treatment for hepatitis C virus required injections over long periods, was limited in its effectiveness and caused severe side-effects. It was also very expensive.

[Message of Dr Ala Alwan on the occasion of World Hepatitis Day 2016](#) | [Arabic](#) | [French](#)

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