

## Hepatitis C can be cured



July 2016, Cairo – To commemorate World Hepatitis Day this year, the World Health Organization (WHO) is calling on decision-makers and people affected by the disease to work together to put hepatitis treatment within the reach of all people living with chronic hepatitis C. The newly available treatment known as direct-acting antivirals is safe, easy to administer and can cure over 95% of people with hepatitis C within 12–24 weeks. However, its price is high both for individuals to afford and for governments to make available.

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 cancer. Currently, nearly 16 million people live with chronic hepatitis C in the Region.

“Previously, treatment for hepatitis C infection required injections over long periods, was limited in its effectiveness and caused severe side-effects,” said WHO Regional Director Dr Ala Alwan. “Today there are new game-changing medicines at hand that offer the promise of an end to chronic hepatitis C. Yet the price of one course of treatment with this new generation of hepatitis medicines can reach many thousands of dollars. This is not affordable for individuals or for governments,” Dr Alwan explained.

“The responsibility of ensuring the right to health falls equally on governments and on pharmaceutical companies. Pharmaceutical companies have an obligation to put into place mechanisms for improving access to essential medicines for those who cannot afford them, and governments have a responsibility to make essential medicines available in a sustainable manner,” Dr Alwan emphasized.

World Hepatitis Day 2016 also focuses on increasing awareness among the public and health care workers of the new treatment. People living with hepatitis C and those affected by it, including health care providers, must take an active role with their governments in stepping up the demand for treatment, through getting organized and taking the lead in making direct-acting antivirals more affordable.

**Related link**

[World Hepatitis Day 2016](#)

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