

# World Hepatitis day – 28<sup>th</sup> July 2015

Hepatitis is a medical condition defined by the inflammation of the liver and characterized by the presence of inflammatory cells in the tissue of the organ. Hepatitis may occur with limited or no symptoms, but often leads to jaundice (a yellow discoloration of the skin, mucous membrane, and conjunctiva), poor appetite, and malaise. Hepatitis is acute when it lasts less than six months and chronic when it persists longer.

Acute hepatitis can be self-limiting (healing on its own), can progress to chronic hepatitis, or, rarely, can cause acute liver failure. Chronic hepatitis may have no symptoms, or may progress over time to fibrosis (scarring of the liver) and cirrhosis (chronic liver failure). Cirrhosis of the liver increases the risk of developing hepatocellular carcinoma (a form of liver cancer).

Worldwide, viral hepatitis is the most common cause of liver inflammation. Other causes include autoimmune diseases and ingestion of toxic substances (notably alcohol), certain medications (such as paracetamol), some industrial organic solvents, and plants.

Viral hepatitis - a group of infectious diseases known as hepatitis A, B, C, D, and E - affects hundreds of millions of people worldwide, causing acute and chronic liver disease and killing close to 1.5 million people every year, mostly from hepatitis B and C. These infections can be prevented, but most people don't know how.

Hepatitis virus types A, B, C, D and E cause infection and inflammation of the liver that can lead to Severe disease and death

## WHO Guidelines for Hepatitis A & E

- ✚ Spread by poor food hygiene, unsafe water and lack of sanitation
- ✚ The risk is higher in rural areas of developing countries but you can catch it anywhere

### Ways to protect yourself

- ✚ Talk to your healthcare provider about the hepatitis A Vaccine.
- ✚ Cook food well and eat it while it's hot. Avoid raw shellfish and raw meat.
- ✚ ALWAYS wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet. Changing a baby's nappy & before preparing food & eating.
- ✚ Peel fruit & vegetables, wash salads in clean water
- ✚ Only drink safe water

An estimated 20 million people are infected with Hepatitis E & 1.4 million with Hepatitis a every year

## WHO Guidelines for Hepatitis B, C & D

Spread by Blood, Semen and other body fluids

### Ways to protect yourself

- ✚ Talk to your healthcare provider about the Hepatitis B vaccine
- ✚ NEVER share needles, razors or toothbrushes
- ✚ If you are pregnant, talk to your doctor about how to prevent transmission to your baby
- ✚ Use only sterilized tattoo and piercing instruments
- ✚ Use condoms correctly and consistently
- ✚ Where possible, choose oral medications instead of injection

### Get tested you are at risk if

- ✚ You have ever had medical or dental treatment with unsterile instruments
- ✚ You have received a blood transfusion in a country that does not test for hepatitis
- ✚ Your mother was infected with hepatitis when you were born
- ✚ You have ever injected drugs
- ✚ You are living with HIV

- ✚ More than 1 million people die each year from disease caused by hepatitis B & C
- ✚ MOST OF THOSE INFECTED DON'T KNOW THEY HAVE IT, INCREASING THE RISK OF DEVELOPING SEVERE LIVER DISEASE & TRANSMITTING THE VIRUS TO OTHERS.

## WHO key messages of the World Hepatitis Day 2015

### Prevent hepatitis – know the risks

Unsafe blood, unsafe injections, and sharing drug-injection equipment can all result in hepatitis infection.

### Prevent hepatitis – demand safe injections

2 million people a year contract hepatitis from unsafe injections. Using sterile, single-use syringes can prevent these infections

### Prevent hepatitis – vaccinate children

Approximately 780 000 persons die each year from hepatitis B infection. A safe and effective vaccine can protect from hepatitis B infection for life.

### Prevent hepatitis – get tested, seek treatment

Effective medicines exist to treat hepatitis B and cure hepatitis C.