

World Hepatitis Day: PAHO calls for expanded access to diagnosis and treatment

Washington, DC, 25 July 2024 (PAHO) – In the run-up to [World Hepatitis Day](#) (July 28), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is urging countries to expand access to testing and treatment for viral hepatitis, which affects more than ten million people in the Americas, only 23% of whom are diagnosed.

Of the five types of hepatitis, B and C are responsible for most illnesses and deaths. In the Americas, an estimated 60,000 to 100,000 people die each year from these diseases. Most symptoms appear during the later stages of the disease, once severe liver disease or cancer has already developed.

"Hepatitis B and C are silent chronic infections that can progress to cirrhosis or liver cancer. The good news is that there are medications that can cure hepatitis C, as well as effective treatments to control hepatitis B," Dr. Jarbas Barbosa, Director of PAHO said. "It is crucial to strengthen our efforts and investment to end this public health problem," he added.

According to the World Health Organization's 2024 [Global Hepatitis Report](#), only 36% of people infected with hepatitis C globally are diagnosed and 20% receive curative treatment.

As for chronic hepatitis B, only 13% of those infected are diagnosed and 2.6% receive life-saving medication.

Vaccination against hepatitis B, included in the immunization schedules of all countries and territories in the region, is helping to eliminate mother-to-child transmission during childbirth as a public health problem. This underscores the importance of continuing vaccination to prevent infection in new generations.

Under the slogan "It's time for action!" on this World Day, PAHO emphasizes the urgency of accelerating measures to improve prevention, diagnosis and treatment of the disease. PAHO works in collaboration with countries in the region on the design and implementation of national policies for the elimination of hepatitis, with strategies focused on primary care. It also facilitates access to diagnostic tests, treatments and vaccines at more affordable prices through its Regional Revolving Funds.

The global benchmark price for curative treatment of hepatitis C is USD \$60 per 12-week course, and for hepatitis B treatment, it is USD \$2.4 per month.

World Hepatitis Day, celebrated on July 28, is an opportunity to intensify the global fight against these diseases, promote action and participation of

individuals, partners and the public, and underscore the need for a stronger global response.

The day is commemorated on July 28 to celebrate the birth of Dr. Baruch Blumberg, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1976 for his discovery of the hepatitis B virus in 1967 and his contribution to the invention of a diagnostic test and corresponding vaccine.

Hepatitis B and C, along with mother-to-child transmission of hepatitis B, are included in PAHO's [Elimination Initiative](#), which aims to eliminate more than 30 communicable diseases and related conditions in the Americas by 2030.

Links

[World Hepatitis Day 2024](#)

[Global hepatitis report 2024: action for access in low- and middle-income countries](#)

[PAHO Regional Revolving Funds](#)

PAHO's [Elimination Initiative](#)

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The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) works with the countries of the Americas to improve the health and quality of life of its population. Founded in 1902, it is the world's oldest international public health agency. It serves as the Regional Office of WHO for the Americas and is the specialized health agency of the Inter-American system.