

Egypt Becomes 1st Country To Achieve Gold Tier Status For Hepatitis C

Why In News

- WHO announced that Egypt had made “**unprecedented progress**” towards eliminating hepatitis C.
- The Arab Republic of Egypt has become the first country to achieve the “**gold tier**” status on the path to elimination of hepatitis C as per WHO criteria.
- This means that **Egypt has fulfilled WHO's programmatic coverage** targets that will set the country up to achieve the reduced incidence and mortality targets of full elimination before 2030.
- Egypt’s journey, from having one of the **world’s highest rates of hepatitis C** infection to being on the path to elimination in less than 10 years, is nothing short of astounding,” said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.



In accordance with normative standards established by WHO
and the recommendation of the Viral Hepatitis Subgroup of the Global Validation Advisory Committee

The World Health Organization

certifies the achievement of the **Gold Tier** on the
Path to Elimination of Hepatitis C Virus
as a Public Health Problem

Arab Republic of Egypt

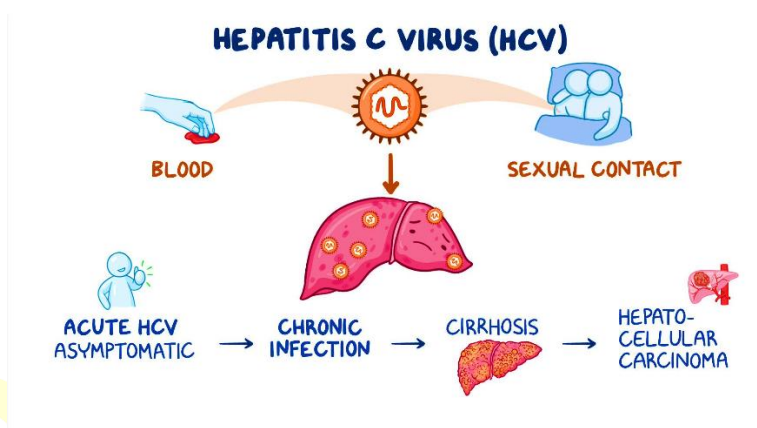
A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus".

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

WHO Director General
October 2023

Hepatitis C

- An infection **caused by a virus** that attacks the **liver** and leads to inflammation.
- The virus can cause both **acute and chronic hepatitis**, ranging in severity from a mild illness to a serious, lifelong illness including **liver cirrhosis and cancer**.
- Usually caused by a group of viruses known as the “**hepatotropic**” (liver directed) viruses, including A, B, C, D and E.
- Other viruses may also cause it, such as the **varicella virus** that causes chicken pox.

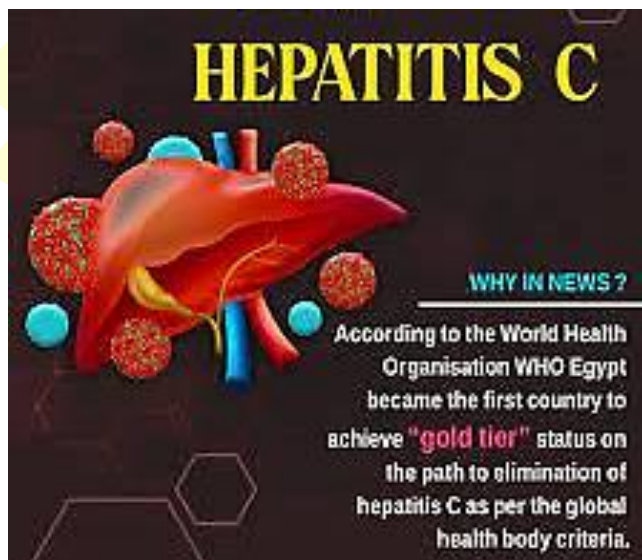


- The virus is spread by contact with contaminated blood; for example, from sharing needles or from unsterile tattoo equipment.
- Most people have **no symptoms**. Those who do develop symptoms may have fatigue, nausea, loss of appetite and yellowing of the eyes and skin.
- **Other causes** include drugs and alcohol abuse, fat buildup in the liver (fatty liver hepatitis) or an autoimmune process in which a person’s body makes antibodies that attack the liver (autoimmune hepatitis).

	Hepatitis A	Hepatitis B	Hepatitis C
Causative Virus	Hepatitis A Virus (HAV)	Hepatitis B Virus (HBV)	Hepatitis C Virus (HCV)
Transmission	Fecal-oral route (contaminated food/water)	Blood and body fluids (unsafe sex, sharing needles)	Blood-to-blood contact (sharing needles, transfusions)

Gold Tier

- According to the 2023 **WHO Guidance for country validation** of viral hepatitis elimination and path to elimination, countries can apply for full validation of gold, silver or bronze tiers on the path to elimination based on achieving relevant targets.
- The “gold tier” status to reach the stated goal of eliminating hepatitis C includes meeting **specific criteria** such as ensuring :
 - **100% blood and injection safety**, maintaining a minimum of 150 needles/syringes per year for people who inject drugs (PWID),
 - **Diagnosis of over 80%** of people living with chronic hepatitis C virus (HCV),
 - **Treating of over 70%** of individuals diagnosed with HCV, and the establishing of a sentinel surveillance programme for hepatitis sequelae, including liver cancer.
- **Egypt has diagnosed** 87% of its hepatitis C patients and provided curative treatment to 93% of those diagnosed, surpassing the WHO’s gold tier targets.



Egypt’s Journey

- “Egypt’s journey from having **one of the world’s highest rates of hepatitis C** infection to being on the path to **elimination in less than 10 years** is nothing short of astounding,” said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General.



- Egypt has successfully transitioned from having one of the highest rates of hepatitis C in the world to one of the lowest by reducing the prevalence of hepatitis C **from 10% to 0.38% in just over a decade.**
- In 2006, the country established the **National Committee for Control of Viral Hepatitis**, a governance structure to oversee and lead the national hepatitis response. Starting in 2014 and reinforced in 2018, the President of Egypt introduced a countrywide campaign to eliminate hepatitis C that offered free testing and treatment for hepatitis C. **The “100 million seha” (100 million healthy lives) campaign.**



“100 Million Seha” campaign

- WHO notes with appreciation the ongoing commitment of the **Ministry of Health and Population** to sustain robust screening, care and treatment services for people with HCV.

- Egypt launched its nationwide campaign, – known as the “100 million seha” campaign – which means a **100 million healthy lives**.
- It has resulted **in testing over 60 million people** and treating more than 4 million people. And by doing so, Egypt reduced the incidence of new infections from **300 per 100 000 in 2014 to 9 per 100 000 in 2022**. This is very close to the ultimate goal of hepatitis C elimination of less than 5 per 100 000 new cases per year and similar levels for viral hepatitis deaths.



Global Condition

- Globally, an estimated **58 million people** have chronic hepatitis C virus infection, with about **1.5 million new infections occurring per year**.
- There are an estimated **3.2 million adolescents and children** with chronic hepatitis C infection.
- WHO estimated that in 2019, approximately 290 000 people died from hepatitis C, mostly from cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma (primary liver cancer).
- Direct-acting antiviral medicines (DAAs) can cure more than 95% of persons with hepatitis C infection, but access to diagnosis and treatment is low.
- There is currently no effective vaccine against hepatitis C.

