

# Docs: Awareness needed on Hepatitis B, vaccination

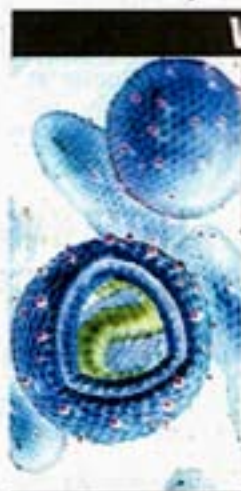
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Most people with hepatitis B or C are unaware that they carry the virus. When they are diagnosed, the infection may already have done irreversible damage to the liver.

The silent killer, viral hepatitis, affects hundreds of millions of people worldwide, killing close to 1.4 million people every year. On World Hepatitis Day, which is being observed on July 28, doctors in the city point out the need to create awareness and recommend hepatitis B vaccination.

"For five years now, hepatitis B vaccine has become mandatory for kids. We have vaccination for HBV, but not for C. If a person is infected with HBV, he develops cirrhosis in 10 years' time and liver cancer anytime after three years. As the prevalence of hepatitis is quite high in our country, the screening programme plays a very pivotal role," says Dr Anand Khakhar, liver transplant surgeon and the founder of 'Love your liver foundation', a non-profit organisation.

In India, the prevalence of HBV is nearly 4 to 4.5



## VIRAL STATS

- If a person is infected with HBV, he develops cirrhosis in 10 years' time and liver cancer anytime after three years.
- Once diagnosed with HBV, monitoring periodically will help in showing first signs of cirrhosis or liver cancer.
- In India, the prevalence of HBV is nearly 4 to 4.5 per cent and hepatitis C is 1.5 to 2 per cent.

per cent and hepatitis C is 1.5 to 2 per cent. "The total prevalence is nearly 6 per cent and of the total and 20 per cent is affected by cirrhosis and liver cancer. In India, liver transplants do not even cross 1,000 a year and the number of people who need the liver transplantation is too huge. Once diagnosed with HBV, monitoring periodically will help in showing first signs of cirrhosis or liver cancer," informs Dr Khakhar.

Recently, SRL Diagnostics conducted a study in which it was revealed that four per cent of Indians are carriers of HBV and 1.9 per cent Indians are infected with HCV. The diagnostics

has launched a new reference test, Echosens Fibro Meter Virus, which helps in detection of significant fibrosis and cirrhosis.

Hepatitis is transmitted through transfusion of infected blood and blood products and unprotected sexual contact with an infected person among others. With an aim to provide free hepatitis B screening and vaccination for children, MIOT International conducted an awareness programme on Sunday. Almost 1,000 children from classes 8 to 12 visited MIOT and learned about early diagnosis of the disease, steps to prevent and how to remove fear or myths regarding the illness.