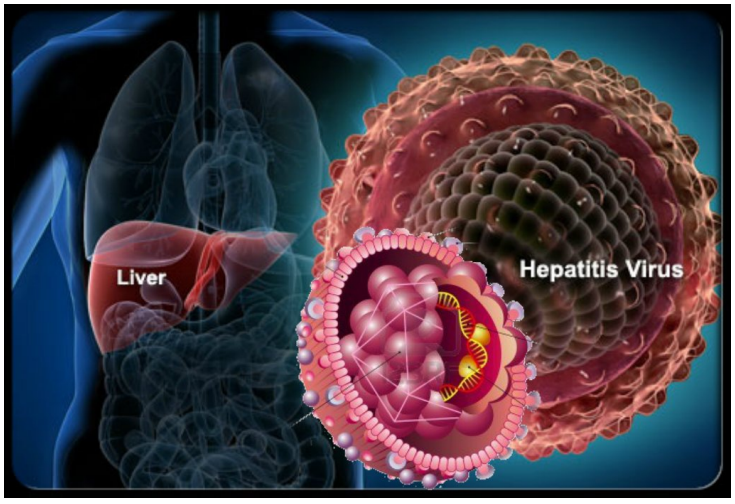
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Centre gears up for curbing hepatitis

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The government will identify high burden districts under the action plan and put them under greater surveillance.



Setting itself a three-year target to eliminate hepatitis, which affects 52 million people in the country, the health ministry is gearing up to roll out a national action plan by October end.

Prevalence of hepatitis B is high in tribal areas in India. Chronic Hepatitis B infection accounts for about 30 per cent of liver cirrhosis and 40-50 per cent of liver cancers in India. Outbreaks of acute and fulminant hepatitis B still occur mainly due to inadequately sterilised needles and syringes.

Experts say over 90 per cent of Hepatitis C patients can be cured with treatment. However, most people infected with the disease are unaware of it. Apart from making testing and treatment options available at district levels, the action plan will also include testing guidelines and training for healthcare workers. The government will also identify high burden districts under the action plan and put them under greater surveillance.

The regional action plan for Hepatitis B and C will focus on five essential components – expanding coverage for Hepatitis B vaccine, blood safety, making treatment options available, prevention from reusable syringes and sanitation and safe water. The health ministry is working with the UN agency to develop the action plan.