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## Government to Give Free Antiviral for Hepatitis C

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The Government of India is set to launch an ambitious programme — **National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme** - to control viral hepatitis. As per the programme an expensive antiviral for Hepatitis C infections will be made available free of cost at all government hospitals.

### Key Highlights

- The National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme will be launched on July 28 which is observed as World Hepatitis Day.
  - It aims at both prevention and treatment of hepatitis which is among the leading causes of liver cancer, cirrhosis of liver and acute liver failure.
  - The programme, part of the National Health Mission, will set up and upgrade facilities for the diagnosis and treatment primarily of hepatitis B and C.
  - Designated treatment centres will provide the anti-viral to hepatitis C patients. They will also provide hepatitis B vaccine to babies born to mothers carrying the virus within 24 hours of birth.
  - It aims to treat a minimum of 3 lakh hepatitis C cases over a period of three years.
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- Hepatitis A and E viruses are important causes of acute viral hepatitis and acute liver failure (ALF).
  - Hepatitis A virus is responsible for 10-30 percent of acute hepatitis and 5-15 percent of acute liver failure cases in India.
  - Hepatitis E virus is said to be responsible for 10-40 percent of acute hepatitis and 15-45 percent of acute liver failure cases.
  - According to a 2014 study in the Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hepatology, incidence rate of liver cancer in India for men ranges from 0.7 to 7.5 and for women between 0.2 and 2.2 per 100,000 population per year. The male to female ratio for liver cancer in India is 4:1.

- Sofosbuvir, the antiviral for Hepatitis C costs \$63,000-94,000 for the full course in the US and Europe.