

Current Health Event

Viral Hepatitis A

The annual incidence of viral hepatitis A (HAV) in Lebanon has been increasing in particular since 2012. In 2013, the HAV incidence has reached 33/100000 compared to numbers ranging between 5 and 18 before 2011. For 2014, the annualized incidence rate of HAV is 23/100000.

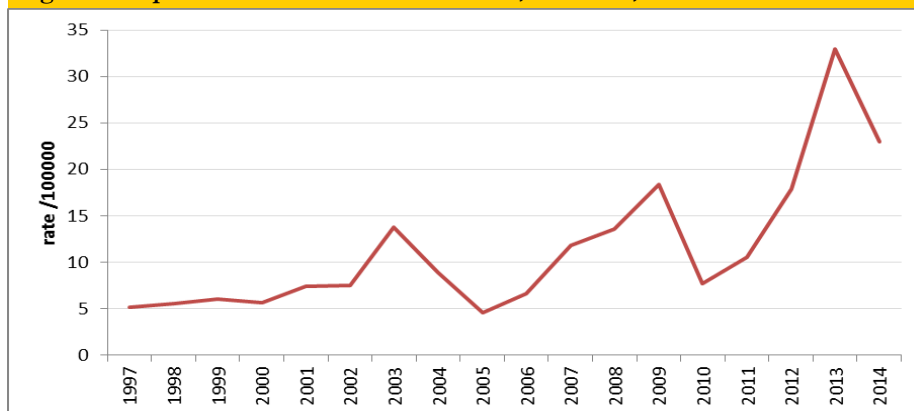
Editorial note:

The prevalence of HAV is very closely related to the socioeconomic status of the population and may vary within the same country according to changes in hygienic conditions.

Although infection by the hepatitis A virus is often asymptomatic or accompanied by mild, nonspecific illness in young children, in adults the disease can be severe. The case fatality ratio of HAV is estimated to be 0.3-0.6% and reaches up to 1.8% in adults older than 50 years of age.

Cases were reported from all over Lebanon. The highest incidence rates per 100000 inhabitants were found in the Bekaa (96 in 2013 and 79 in 2014), the North (56 in 2013 and 55 in 2014), and Nabatieh (24 in 2013 and 66 in 2014). The lowest incidence rates were seen in Beirut, Mount-Lebanon and the South (2-13/100.000). The highest age-specific rates were observed among the under 20 years old. Among the reported cases, 42% of the cases were Lebanese, 14-16% were Syrian, and 42-44% unspecified. The reported cases of HAV were identified using standardized case-definitions. The majority of the cases (76-78%) were laboratory-confirmed.

Figure 1: Reported annual incidence of HAV, Lebanon, 1997-2014



Source: Ministry of Public Health, Lebanon (for 2014: annualized rate)

Risk factors include:

- Poor sanitation
- Lack of safe water
- Injecting drugs
- Living in a household with an infected person
- Being a sexual partner of someone with acute hepatitis A infection
- Travelling to areas of high endemicity without being immunized.

HAV case definitions:

• Suspected case:

Any reported case with typical acute illness (fever, acute jaundice, dark urine, anorexia, etc., elevated urine urobilinogen, >2.5 times the upper limit of serum alanine aminotransferase).

• Confirmed case:

- Laboratory confirmation: positive IgM serology for HAV; or
- Epidemiologically-link: suspected case with contact with a laboratory-confirmed case (household or sexual contact during the 15-50 days before the onset of symptoms).

HAV is a preventable disease. The Ministry of Public Health, with the support of WHO and other UN agencies, is working to control the disease by intensifying health promotion activities in terms of hygiene, provision of safe food and water and introducing the HAV vaccine in the national childhood vaccination calendar.

Cumulative Notifiable diseases in Lebanon (Syrian)

Disease	2013 Cumul	2014 Cumul*	Jun	Jul
Vaccine Preventable Diseases				
Polio	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Acute Flaccid Paralysis	34(7)	17(6)	2(0)	0(0)
Measles	1760(232)	207(79)	19(8)	0(0)
Mumps	14(2)	282(38)	16(5)	1(0)
Pertussis	59(9)	40(12)	7(0)	0(0)
Rabies	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Rubella	27(1)	11(6)	1(0)	0(0)
Tetanus	4(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Viral Hep B	141(8)	116(15)	17(0)	1(1)
Water/Food Borne Diseases				
Brucellosis	189(12)	124(15)	25(2)	0(0)
Hydatid cyst	13(3)	10(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Typhoid Fever	407(21)	96(7)	19(2)	0(0)
Viral Hep A	1551(220)	674(112)	57(7)	1(0)
Other Diseases				
Leishmaniasis	1033(1032)	328(326)	24(24)	4(4)
Meningitis	204(24)	98(10)	12(2)	0(0)
Viral Hep C	103(4)	44(1)	7(0)	2(0)

Source: Ministry of Public Health, Lebanon