Hepatitis B and C Drive Liver Cancer Rates

June 6, 2016 By Benjamin Ryan

Bucking the national trend of declining overall cancer rates, liver cancer incidence is steadily rising in the United States, driven by hepatitis B and C virus (HBV and HCV) infection in an aging population.

The U.S. liver cancer rate increased 2.3 percent per year on the whole between 2003 and 2012. The annual death rate resulting from liver cancer is increasing at a faster clip than for any other form of cancer—by an average of 2.8 percent per year among men and 3.4 percent per year among women.

Half of all new cases of liver cancer are hep C related, and 15 percent are connected to hep B. Those living with either virus are at the greatest risk of liver cancer.

The number of new cases of liver cancer increased from 16,265 in 2003 to 28,000 in 2012, a 72 percent increase. In 2012, nearly 23,000 U.S. residents died of liver cancer, representing a 56 percent increase in the number of deaths compared with 2003. Death rates related to hep C and liver cancer were highest among baby boomers, individuals born between 1945 and 1965.

“Treatment for those living with viral hepatitis can greatly reduce their risk of liver cancer,” says John W. Ward, MD, director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Division of Viral Hepatitis. “Although not a cure, sustained antiviral treatment for hepatitis B is also effective in protecting against liver cancer.”

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.hepmag.com/article/hepatitis-b-c-drive-liver-cancer-rates