

Viral hepatitis B and C

Since 1990 Lithuania has been observing a decrease in the incidence of acute viral hepatitis B (VHB). The incidence decreased from 10.9 cases/ 100 000 population in 2001 to 0.9 cases/ 100 000 population in 2014. The location of the infection acquisition of the majority acute cases (82.1 %) in 2014 was not detected. The highest incidence rates for both men and women were in the 25-34 age group. The highest incidence of acute VHB infection in 2014 was reported in Vilnius and Utena counties. According to the latest data provided by European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control¹⁷, the incidence rate of acute VHB in Lithuania is almost the same as EU average (0.8 cases / 100 000 population / 2012). However, according to published literature the actual incidence may be up to 6 times higher than reported, since 50-70 percent of VHB cases are asymptomatic. Viral hepatitis B is vaccine-preventable infection. Infant vaccination coverage against VHB in Lithuania in 2014 was 97.4%.

Since 2001, Lithuania has also been observing a decrease in the incidence of acute viral hepatitis C (VHC). The incidence rates decreased from 5.36 cases/ 100 000 population in 2001 to 1.2 cases/ 100 000 population in 2014. Incidence rate of acute hepatitis C in men in 2014 was higher than for women. Men aged 25-34 years had the highest incidence rate, whereas the highest incidence in women was in the 35 - 44 age group. Infection causes and risk factors in majority of cases were undetected.

Given the natural history of the viral hepatitis infection (50 - 70% of VHB, and 60 - 70% of VHC are asymptomatic)¹⁸, the number of infection cases in Lithuania is likely to be much higher than officially reported.