

CUYAHOGA COUNTY

BOARD OF HEALTH

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MONKEYPOX FAQ

August 2022

What is Monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a rare disease caused by infection with the monkeypox virus. It is a part of the same family of viruses as variola virus, which causes smallpox.

Monkeypox was first discovered in 1958 in a research setting. The first human case was documented in 1970.

Infections are usually associated with travel to West or Central Africa or contact with imported infected animals. Currently, we are seeing cases spread in the United States.

There is no proven treatment for monkeypox, but it usually goes away on its own. Monkeypox is rarely fatal.

What are the symptoms?

The onset, or first sign of symptoms, can take as anywhere from 5-21 days to appear.

A rash often develops near the genitals (penis, testicles, labia, and vagina) or anus. It can also appear on other areas like the hands, feet, chest, face, or mouth.

Other symptoms of monkeypox may include:

- Chills
- Exhaustion
- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches and backache
- Respiratory symptoms such as sore throat, nasal congestion, and cough
- Swollen Lymph Nodes

You may experience all of these or only a few symptoms.

Is a rash a common symptom?

A rash may be the only symptom for some people. The rash will go through several stages, including scabs, before healing. The rash can initially look like pimples or blisters and may be painful or itchy.

Examples of Monkeypox Rashes

Photo credit: UK Health Security Agency



Do not scratch or pick at the rash, as it can spread further and become more painful.

How does Monkeypox spread?

Monkeypox can spread from person-to-person through direct contact with the infectious rash, scabs, or body fluids. It also can be spread by respiratory secretions during prolonged face-to-face contact, or during intimate physical contact.

Pregnant people can spread the virus to their fetus (baby) through the placenta (the place inside a pregnant person's body where a baby receives oxygen and nutrition before being born).

Monkeypox can also be spread through clothing, towels and other fabrics that have touched the rash or body fluids of an infected person.

Infected animals are also a source of spread. If you have been scratched or bitten by an infected animal or have eaten meat or used products from an infected animal, contact a medical provider right away.

When am I contagious?

When you have visible symptoms such as blisters or scabs, you are contagious and can transmit the virus to others. Some people develop flu-like symptoms before the blisters appear. These people are currently also considered an infection risk.

Monkeypox can spread from the time symptoms start until the rash has fully healed and a fresh layer of skin has formed. The illness typically lasts 2-4 weeks once symptoms begin.

How likely am I to get Monkeypox?

At this time, the risk of contracting Monkeypox in the United States is believed to be low. It does not spread easily between people (other than through the methods described above), so the time from exposure to the start of symptoms gives health officials time to identify contacts and hopefully break the chain of infection.

Is monkeypox a sexually-transmitted infection?

Monkeypox is not considered to be a sexually-transmitted infection. It can spread from one person to another through close physical contact, including sexual contact. It is currently not known whether monkeypox can be spread through sexual transmission routes (semen or vaginal fluids), but direct skin-to-skin contact with lesions during sexual activities can spread the virus.

Monkeypox rashes are sometimes found on genitals and in the mouth, which is likely to contribute to transmission during sexual contact. Mouth-to-skin contact can cause transmission where skin or mouth lesions are present.

Monkeypox rashes can resemble some sexually-transmitted diseases, including herpes and syphilis. This may explain why several of the cases in the current outbreak have been identified amongst those seeking care in sexual health clinics.

The risk of becoming infected with monkeypox is not limited to people who are sexually active or men who have sex with men. Anyone who has close physical contact with someone who is infectious is at risk. Anyone who has symptoms that could be monkeypox should seek advice from a health worker immediately.

How can I prevent Monkeypox?

- Avoid skin-to-skin contact with people who have a rash that looks like monkeypox
- Do not touch the rash or scabs of someone with monkeypox
- Do not kiss, hug, cuddle, or have sex with someone with monkeypox
- Do not share food, drinks, or eating utensils with someone with monkeypox
- Do not handle or touch the bedding, towels, or clothing of someone with monkeypox
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer

Your gender or sexual orientation does not matter. Infections can happen to anyone.

What should I do if I think I was exposed to someone with monkeypox?

Monitor yourself closely for signs and symptoms for three weeks after the time you were last exposed. If you do develop symptoms, contact your health care provider for advice, testing and medical care.

What should I do if I think I have monkeypox?

- See a healthcare provider if you notice a new or unexplained rash or other monkeypox symptoms.
- Avoid close contact, including intimate physical contact, with others until a healthcare provider examines you.
- If you are waiting for test results, avoid close contact, including intimate physical contact, until you receive a negative result.
- If your test is positive, stay isolated until your rash has healed, all scabs have fallen off, and a fresh layer of intact skin has formed.

If you think you have symptoms or have been a close contact of someone with monkeypox, contact your primary care provider for advice, testing and medical care. If possible, isolate yourself (one room, one bed, one bathroom) and avoid close contact with others. Your health care provider will collect a sample from you for testing so that you can get proper care.

Can children get monkeypox?

Yes. Children are typically more likely to have worse symptoms compared to teenagers and adults. The virus can also be passed to an unborn or a newborn baby through birth or early physical contact.

Tecovirimat (TPOXX) is the first choice when giving monkeypox medication to children and adolescents

Can people die from Monkeypox?

Based on the strain of monkeypox virus identified in this outbreak - the West African strain - death is rare. Over 99% of people who get this form of the disease are likely to survive. However, people with weakened immune systems, children under 8 years of age, people with a history of eczema, and people who are pregnant or breastfeeding may be more likely to get seriously ill or die.

Although the West African strain is rarely fatal, symptoms can be extremely painful, People might have permanent scarring from the rash.

Is there treatment for Monkeypox?

There are no treatments specifically for monkeypox virus infections yet. However, monkeypox and smallpox viruses are similar, which means that antiviral drugs and vaccines developed to protect against smallpox may be used to prevent and treat monkeypox virus infections. Antivirals, such as Tecovirimat (TPOXX), may be recommended for people who are more likely to get severely ill, like patients with weakened immune systems.

Is there a vaccine for Monkeypox?

Yes. The CDC recommends vaccination for people who have been exposed to monkeypox and people who may be more likely to get monkeypox.

The vaccine should be given within four days from the date of exposure in order to prevent onset of the disease. If given between 4-14 days after the date of exposure, vaccination may reduce the symptoms of disease, but may not prevent the disease.

The preferred vaccine to protect against monkeypox is JYNNEOS, which requires two doses. JYNNEOS reaches its full level of protection 14 days after the second dose is given.

Should I get vaccinated for Monkeypox?

The CDC does not recommend widespread vaccination right now. However, vaccination may be right for those who have:

- Been exposed to the virus
- Are at risk of being exposed to the virus
- Are close contacts with someone who is infected

Does past exposure to chickenpox provide any protection against monkeypox?

Chickenpox is caused by a different virus. There is currently no specific data showing that past exposure to chickenpox provides protection against monkeypox.

I've had monkeypox in the past. Can I catch it again?

We do not yet have a clear understanding whether a previous monkeypox infection gives you immunity against future infections and for how long. Even if you have had monkeypox in the past, you should be doing everything you can to avoid getting reinfected.

Can pets be infected with Monkeypox?

The monkeypox virus can infect rodents (squirrels, rats and mice), rabbits and monkeys. The rodents in Africa that are the natural hosts of the virus often show minimal symptoms from an infection. Monkeys and rabbits can develop respiratory symptoms, eye infections, skin problems and fever.

A monkeypox infection has never been confirmed in dogs, cats, cows, pigs, sheep and goats.

Call your veterinarian if you notice an animal appears sick within 21 days of having contact with a person who has probable or confirmed monkeypox.

Do NOT surrender, euthanize, or abandon pets just because of a potential exposure to Monkeypox virus.

Do NOT wipe or bathe your pet with chemical disinfectants, alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, or other products, such as sanitizer, counter-cleaning wipes, or other industrial or surface cleaners.

Is there a self-test that I can use to check if I have monkeypox?

No. If you think you might have monkeypox, contact your primary care provider immediately.