



Get the facts about monkeypox

What you need to know to stay safe and informed.

What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is an illness caused by the monkeypox virus. It's related to smallpox, but milder. It can cause a rash and flu-like symptoms. Monkeypox is found mostly in West and Central Africa. But recently, it's spread to people in other countries.

The virus causing monkeypox was first discovered in monkeys and can infect multiple other animals and people.

How does it spread?

Monkeypox spreads by close contact with an animal or person with the virus. It can spread from person-to-person by:

- Having close skin-to-skin contact or direct contact with skin lesions of someone with monkeypox is the most common way monkeypox infects people.
- Handling the clothing, bedding, towels or objects used by someone with monkeypox.
- While uncommon, monkeypox may be spread through the "air" without direct skin-to-skin contact. This only happens with close face-to-face contact for a long period.

Short interactions that do not include physical contact are not high risk.

Most of the monkeypox cases in the U.S. have been in men who have sex with men. But monkeypox can infect **anyone**. If you have close physical contact with someone who has monkeypox, you can get it.

At this time, the chances of getting monkeypox in the U.S. are thought to be low. Monkeypox does not spread easily between people.

What are the symptoms?

If you're exposed to monkeypox, it can take one to two weeks to get symptoms. These may include:

- A fever, headache, muscle or back ache, chills, exhaustion or sore lymph nodes.
- A painful rash that may look like bumps, blisters or ulcers.
- The rash may be all over your body or limited to one area. In the current outbreak in the U.S., the rash is often limited to the genitals.

Call your doctor right away if you get an unexplained rash or sores anywhere on your body. Tell your doctor you're worried you may have monkeypox. Don't have sex or close physical contact with anyone until you see your doctor.

Avoid High Risk Situations:

- Avoid skin-to-skin contact in group settings.
- Talk to your sexual partner about any recent illness. Note any new or unexplained sores or rashes anywhere on your body or your partner's body.
- Monkeypox can be spread during sexual activity. The skin rash caused by monkeypox can be confused with other sexually transmitted diseases. Consult your physician if you notice symptoms.

What if I'm exposed?

If you've had contact with a person or animal with monkeypox, watch for symptoms for 21 days. If you don't get symptoms during this time, you can take part in regular daily activities.

If you have fever, headache, fatigue, weakness, enlarged lymph nodes with a rash after an exposure to monkeypox, call your provider.

Is there a treatment?

Monkeypox usually goes away on its own. Most people get better in two to four weeks. Infections with the type of monkeypox in the U.S. rarely cause death.

There are no medications specifically for monkeypox. The monkeypox and smallpox viruses are similar. The vaccines and medications used for smallpox may be also used for monkeypox.

If you are at risk for severe disease, your doctor may suggest medications or vaccinations to treat or prevent monkeypox. Individuals at higher risk for severe disease with monkeypox include:

- People with HIV.
- Those who are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- Children under age 8.
- People with a history of or current atopic dermatitis or eczema.

Your public health department and CDC will determine if you should receive a vaccine.

To learn more about monkeypox and the vaccines, read these FAQs from the CDC.

Visit cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox

How do I prevent monkeypox?

Preventive steps include:

- Don't have skin-to-skin contact with people who have a rash that looks like monkeypox.
- Don't share eating utensils or cups with a person with monkeypox.
- Don't touch the bedding, towels or clothing of someone with monkeypox.
- Limit the number of partners with whom you have sex and intimate contact.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

People who engage in sex with multiple anonymous partners are at higher risk for getting monkeypox.

For more information about monkeypox, visit cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox

Sources

- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Monkeypox. Last reviewed June 30, 2022. Accessed July 28, 2022.