



Monkeypox Virus Fact Sheet

What is Monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a viral disease caused by infection with the monkeypox virus. Monkeypox symptoms are similar to smallpox symptoms, but milder, and monkeypox is rarely fatal. Monkeypox was discovered in 1958 when two outbreaks of a pox-like disease occurred in colonies of monkeys kept for research. Despite being named “monkeypox,” the source of the disease remains unknown. However, African rodents and non-human primates (like monkeys) might harbor the virus and infect people.

The first human case of monkeypox was recorded in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1970. Prior to the 2022 outbreak, monkeypox had been reported in people in several central and western African countries. Previously, almost all monkeypox cases in people outside of Africa were linked to international travel to countries where the disease commonly occurs or through imported animals. These cases occurred on multiple continents.

What is the cause of Monkeypox?

Monkeypox is caused by the Monkeypox virus, which belongs to the Orthopoxvirus group of viruses. Other Orthopoxviruses that cause infections in humans include variola (smallpox), vaccinia (used for smallpox vaccine), and cowpox viruses. There are 2 distinct strains of the Monkeypox virus: the Central African strain and the West African strain. The West African strain is typically associated with less severe illness.

What are the clinical features of Monkeypox?

In humans, Monkeypox is similar to smallpox, although infection is usually mild, and many patients are asymptomatic. The incubation period (i.e., the time from exposure to when symptoms appear) for Monkeypox is about 12 days with a range from 7 to 17 days. The illness often begins with fever, headache, muscle aches, backache, swollen lymph nodes, a general feeling of discomfort, and exhaustion. Typically, within 1 to 3 days after the fever occurs, the patient develops a papular rash (i.e., raised fluid-filled bumps), often first on the face but sometimes initially on other parts of the body, especially the genital and perianal areas. The lesions usually develop through several stages before crusting and falling off over the course of 2-4 weeks. Sometimes, people get a rash first, followed by other symptoms. Others only experience a rash.

How long does Monkeypox last?

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.

Is Monkeypox fatal?

To date, there have been no deaths reported in the United States due to the Monkeypox virus. Studies of human Monkeypox infections in rural Central and West Africa – where people live in remote areas

and are medically underserved – have reported case-fatality ratios of 1% to 10%. Additionally, the Monkeypox virus detected in cases so far belong to the West African strain, which is associated with a lower mortality rate than the central African strain.

How do people get Monkeypox?

Monkeypox spreads in different ways. The virus 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 (within a 6-foot radius for >3 hours), or during intimate physical contact, such as kissing, cuddling, or sex. In addition, pregnant people can spread the virus to their fetus through the placenta.

Touching items (such as clothing or linens) that previously touched the infectious rash or body fluids is another way monkeypox spreads. It's also possible for people to get monkeypox from infected animals, either by being scratched or bitten by the animal or by eating meat or using products from an infected animal.

Who is at greatest risk of getting Monkeypox?

Monkeypox does not spread easily between people; however, anyone in close contact with a person with monkeypox can get it and should take steps to protect themselves. People who do not have monkeypox symptoms cannot spread the virus to others.

People with monkeypox in the current outbreak generally report having close, sustained physical contact with other people who have monkeypox. While many of those affected in the current global outbreaks are gay, bisexual, or other men who have sex with men, anyone who has been in close contact with someone who has monkeypox can get the illness.

How do I get tested for Monkeypox?

Several commercial laboratories and the state public health laboratory are offering testing for Monkeypox. A person must be evaluated by a healthcare provider to determine if their symptoms appear to be Monkeypox and require testing. The healthcare provider can collect specimens for testing and arrange for testing directly with a commercial laboratory or can contact the state or local health department to arrange for testing at the state public health laboratory.

Is there a treatment for Monkeypox?

Most patients have mild illness and require no treatment. Primarily the treatment, when needed, is supportive but there is an antiviral, called Tecovirimat, that treats Monkeypox.

Is there a vaccine for Monkeypox?

There are 2 vaccines against Monkeypox: ACAM2000 and JYNNEOS. These vaccines are used to prevent Monkeypox infection and can be used for post-exposure vaccination. Post-exposure vaccination prevents infection in a known exposed person such as those persons who have had close or intimate contact with infected individuals or animals. These persons can be vaccinated up to 14 days after exposure.

How is vaccine currently being used?

Vaccine doses are being used to target individual who may be at risk of acquiring monkeypox or those who might have severe outcomes if they become infected.

Currently, this outbreak is largely affecting gay, bisexual, or other men who have sex with men. People who may be eligible for vaccination include:

- People who have been identified by public health officials as a contact of someone with monkeypox
- People who may have been exposed to monkeypox, such as:
 - People who are aware that one of their sexual partners in the past 2 weeks has been diagnosed with monkeypox
 - People who had multiple sexual partners in the past 2 weeks in an area with known monkeypox cases

Additional groups, including pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) will be added as additional vaccine resources are made available.

If I am eligible for Monkeypox vaccine, how to do it get it?

Individuals who think they meet the vaccine eligibility criteria can contact 1-877- PA-HEALTH or their local health department to determine if they are eligible and where they can go to receive a dose.

What action should I take if I have been exposed to Monkeypox?

If you have been in contact with a case of monkeypox, you should monitor your health and check your temperature twice daily. If symptoms develop, you should immediately self-isolate and contact your healthcare provider or the health department for further guidance.

If you are a contact and remain asymptomatic, you can continue to do your routine daily activities (e.g., go to work, school). Contacts should not donate blood, cells, tissue, breast milk, semen, or organs while they are under symptom surveillance.

For more information about Monkeypox: <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/faq.html>

This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician and/or veterinarian for specific clinical information related to you or your animal.

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