

Monkeypox — Q&A

What is monkeypox?

- Monkeypox is an infection caused by Monkeypox virus. Monkeypox was first identified in 1958 in Africa and the first human case of monkeypox was recorded in 1970.
- Since early May 2022, the United Kingdom, many European countries, USA, and Canada have seen rising cases of monkeypox.

How is monkeypox spread?

- The virus is spread by direct skin-to-skin contact or prolonged face-to-face contact. This includes through:
 - contact with infectious lesions on the skin, in the mouth and in genital areas (this may also occur during sexual contact);
 - saliva and respiratory droplets in the air formed when coughing or sneezing;
 - sharing personal items like eating utensils, water bottles, drinks, lipsticks, cigarettes, sex toys, etc;
 - surfaces such as bedsheets and other surfaces contaminated by a person with infectious lesions.
- People who have monkeypox can spread the virus at the first sign of illness (e.g. fever, aches, swollen glands) and until all of the scabs from the lesions have fallen off and new skin can be seen (usually 2-4 weeks).

What are the signs and symptoms of monkeypox?

- Symptoms occur 5-21 days after exposure to the virus.
- Early symptoms may include fever (>38° C), swollen lymph nodes, chills, headache, muscle pain, joint pain, backache, sore throat, cough, stuffy nose, exhaustion and extreme weakness.
- A rash begins 1-3 days after the early symptoms and may appear on any part of the body such as the face, genitals, groin or anal area, arms and legs, feet, hands, or inside the mouth.
- The rash moves through stages starting as a flat lesion, progressing to be slightly raised and firm, followed by fluid-filled blisters with clear and then yellow fluid. Finally, the lesions will crust and fall off and new skin will be seen.

What are the complications of monkeypox?

- Severe cases and death rarely occur (about 1%). Death is more common in children under 12 years.
- Monkeypox may cause pneumonia, inflammation of the brain, skin infections from itching, and vision problems.

How is monkeypox diagnosed?

- Monkeypox is confirmed through laboratory testing from a lesion swab.

Monkeypox is not common, so testing for other rash illnesses is also recommended.

Call HealthLine 811 to access testing if you think you may have been exposed or have monkeypox symptoms.

What should you do if you have been diagnosed with monkeypox?

- Stay isolated as much as possible.
- Avoid close, intimate contact and sex with others, especially if lesions can't be covered and you have fever, aches, headache or other general symptoms.
- Avoid contact with people who are at higher risk of severe monkeypox infection – this includes pregnant women, children under 12 years, and people with weakened immune systems.
- Once you no longer have fever or other general symptoms, you may return to activities necessary for daily living including attending work or school as long as the following precautions are taken until scabs from lesions have healed (can take 2 to 4 weeks):
 - Keep lesions covered (with clothing or bandages);
 - Avoid direct contact with others (hugging, kissing, touching);
 - Avoid sharing personal items (towels, clothing, bedding, utensils, toothbrushes, sex toys, drug equipment, etc)
 - Wear a well-fitting mask when around other people (including household members);
 - Wash your hands often and clean frequently touched surfaces;
 - Avoid contact with pets and animals if possible.

How do you treat monkeypox?

- There is no specific treatment.
- Fever reducing medications, rest and fluids may help to relieve symptoms.
- See your primary care provider if experience the following:
 - your lesions become more painful, swollen, red, or if drainage increases;
 - severe fever or chills;
 - shortness of breath or chest pain;
 - new lesions on multiple parts of your body.

Is there a vaccine for monkeypox?

- Yes. Imvamune® may be offered to individuals considered high risk to prevent infection. [See the Imvamune® Fact Sheet.](#)

Call HealthLine 811 for information on monkeypox vaccine eligibility and access.

Are there any special precautions I need to take if I have to care for someone with symptoms?

- Don't share personal items.
- Wear a medical mask whenever in the same room.
- Wear disposable gloves when caring for them including when touching infected skin, clothing, bedding and bandages.
- Reusable items used by the ill person should be washed with regular soap or detergent and the hottest water possible. Ideally, the ill person should handle and wash their own laundry.
- Wash your hands (or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer) after each contact with the ill person or their personal items.
- Wash items used by the ill person using soap and hot water.