



## **What is monkeypox?**

Monkeypox is a rare illness caused by infection with the monkeypox virus. It usually begins with flu-like symptoms and swelling of the lymph nodes. A rash on the face or body can appear a few days later.

Since May 2022, multiple monkeypox cases have been found in countries that don't normally have them, including the United States. Cases appear to be spreading through close contact among individuals within sexual and social networks and have been observed among men who have sex with men.

BPHC wants to reiterate that stigmatizing people because of a disease is never acceptable. We need to advocate against stigma and discrimination: We are all in this together.

## **How is monkeypox spread?**

Monkeypox is not a gay disease. The risk of monkeypox is not limited to people who are sexually active or men who have sex with men. Anyone can get or pass along monkeypox. Monkeypox is spread from person to person through close physical contact, and anyone who has close physical contact with someone who has monkeypox is at risk. Monkeypox can spread to anyone through close, often skin-to-skin contact including:

- Direct contact with monkeypox rash, sores, or scabs.
- Sexual contact of any kind or touching the genitals or anus of a person with monkeypox.
- Hugging, massaging, kissing.
- Talking closely through respiratory droplets or oral fluids from a person with monkeypox.
- Contact with objects such as clothing, bedding, sex toys, or towels.
- Surfaces used by someone with monkeypox.
- Pregnant people can spread the virus to their fetus through the placenta

It's possible, though not as common with the current outbreak, for people to get monkeypox from infected animals, either by being scratched or bitten by the animal or by preparing or eating meat or using products from an infected animal.

A person with monkeypox is considered infectious from the beginning of symptoms. They can stay that way until sores have crusted, scabbed over, fallen off, and a fresh layer of healthy skin has formed underneath. This can often take several weeks.

## **What are the symptoms of monkeypox?**

Symptoms typically start with:

- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Backache
- Swollen lymph nodes

- General feeling of discomfort and exhaustion.

Within 1 to 3 days (sometimes longer) after the start of a fever, a rash can begin that looks like raised bumps, pimples, or fluid-filled sores. The rash can be painful and sores can vary from a few to many. They often first appear on the face, but sometimes around the genitals or anus, and can be confused with syphilis, herpes, and other sexually transmitted infections. Eventually, the bumps get crusty, scab over and fall off. Most people fully recover after 2-4 weeks.

### **Is there treatment for monkeypox?**

Antiviral drugs and vaccines are available to prevent and treat monkeypox virus infections. Antivirals, such as tecovirimat (TPOXX), are currently available for people who are more likely to get severely ill, like patients with weakened immune systems.

If you have [symptoms](#) of monkeypox, please talk to your healthcare provider as soon as possible.

### **Is there a Vaccine?**

Two vaccines licensed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are available for preventing monkeypox infection – JYNNEOS (also known as Imvamune or Imvanex) and ACAM2000. When properly administered before or soon after exposure, vaccines can help protect against monkeypox illness.

The vaccine most commonly used for preventing monkeypox infection is JYNNEOS (also known as Imvamune or Imvanex) which has been licensed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The JYNNEOS vaccine requires two shots, 28 days apart for maximum effectiveness. People are considered fully vaccinated about two weeks after their second shot. However, people who get vaccinated should continue to [protect themselves from infection](#) by avoiding close, skin-to-skin contact, including intimate contact, with someone who has monkeypox.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) has made vaccination available to individuals who live or work in Massachusetts and meet the CDC's current eligibility criteria, prioritizing those who are most at risk of exposure to an individual with monkeypox. This includes:

- Known contacts identified by public health via case investigation, contact tracing, and risk exposure assessments (this may include sexual partners, household contacts, and healthcare workers); as well as
- Presumed contacts who meet the following criteria:
  - Know that a sexual partner in the past 14 days was diagnosed with monkeypox
  - Had multiple sexual partners in the past 14 days in a jurisdiction with known monkeypox

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health will expand eligibility if and when more doses are received from the CDC.

### **Where Can I Get a Vaccine?**

The JYNNEOS vaccine is available **by appointment only** at certain designated health care locations. For a list of providers offering vaccine appointments, visit [mass.gov/monkeypoxvaccine](https://mass.gov/monkeypoxvaccine).

Please be aware that there is currently a limited supply of JYNNEOS, and vaccination is prioritized for individuals at the highest risk of exposure to someone with monkeypox.

## **What can people do to protect themselves and others from getting infected with monkeypox?**

- Avoid physical and sexual contact with anyone who has a new rash or sores or who feels ill.
- Talk to your partners about recent illness.
- Be aware of new or unexplained sores or rashes on your body or your partner's body, including the genitals and anus.
- Avoid touching any rashes or sores on others.
- Minimize skin-to-skin contact, especially if you are attending raves, parties, or large events.

If you feel sick, have a new rash, or think you may have a monkeypox infection:

- Stay home, stay away from others, and seek a doctor immediately.
- Avoid sex and intimacy until a doctor has checked you out.
  - Remind your doctor that this virus is circulating in the area.
- Avoid gatherings, especially if there will be close or skin-to-skin contact.
- Think about your close or sexual contacts within the last 21 days, including people you met through dating apps.
  - You might be asked to share this information to help stop the spread.

If you or someone you live with, have sex with, or are in contact with have monkeypox, the best way to protect yourself and others is to:

- Avoid sex of any kind.
- Do not kiss or touch each other's bodies while you are sick, especially any rash or sores.
- Do not share things like towels, fetish gear, sex toys, and toothbrushes.

If you are caring for someone with monkeypox, taking these steps may help protect you from the virus:

- Wear a mask and gloves when you are close to them or touching their bedding, clothing, or linens.
- Regularly wash your hands.
- Practice physical distancing when possible.

If you or your partner have (or think you might have) monkeypox and decide to have sex, the following can lower the chance of spreading the virus:

- Have virtual sex with no in-person contact.
- Masturbate together at a distance of at least 6 feet.
- Have sex with your clothes on, or cover areas where there are rashes or sores, to avoid skin-to-skin contact.
- Avoid kissing.
- Wash your hands, fetish gear, sex toys and any fabrics (bedding, towels, clothing) after having sex.
- Limit your partners to avoid chances for monkeypox to spread.

People who work in healthcare, such as providers and support staff who may be in contact with people with monkeypox and their linens or items, should wear personal protective equipment to

avoid exposure. They should also regularly wash their hands and use gowns, gloves, N95 or higher respirators, and eye protection.