

What You Need To Know About Monkeypox

Monkeypox is a contagious disease caused by the monkeypox virus. There is currently a monkeypox outbreak in the U.S. and other countries where the virus is usually not seen.

Here is some important information about the virus and how to protect yourself and others.

How does monkeypox spread?

The monkeypox virus is most often spread through:

- Direct contact with a rash or sores of someone who has the virus, or from coming in contact with clothing, bedding or other items used by them
- Respiratory droplets passed through prolonged face-to-face contact

Monkeypox is not as contagious as COVID-19 or the flu. The risk of spread is high during oral sex, anal sex, vaginal sex and other intimate contact such as mutual masturbation, hugging, kissing, cuddling and massage.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms usually start within two weeks after exposure but may not appear for up to 21 days. The most common symptom is a rash or sores that may look like pimples or blisters. The rash or sores may be all over the body or on certain parts, such as the face, hands or feet, or around or inside the mouth, genitals or anus. Some people also have flu-like symptoms — such as fever, chills, headaches, muscle or back aches, swollen lymph nodes, or tiredness — before or at the same time as the rash or sores.

Recent cases have been mild. Most people got better on their own and were not hospitalized. The disease can sometimes be more severe. Even with mild illness, the rash and sores may be itchy and painful and last for two to four weeks.

Who is at risk of getting monkeypox?

Gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men are currently at a greater risk of exposure because the virus is spreading in these social circles and networks. However, anyone can get monkeypox. It can spread during any type of direct or close physical contact, including heterosexual sex.

How can I protect myself and my sexual partners?

- Most importantly, you should not have sex or other close physical contact if you or your sexual partners feel sick, and especially if you or they have a rash or sores anywhere on the body. Continue to avoid physical contact until all sores have healed and a fresh layer of skin has formed, which can take two to four weeks.
- If you choose to have sex while sick, avoid kissing and other face-to-face contact, and cover all sores with clothing or sealed bandages. This may help reduce but not eliminate the risk of transmission.
- Wash your hands, sex toys and bedding before and after sex and other close physical contact whether or not you or your partners have symptoms.
- When making plans, consider the level of risk. Having sex or other close physical contact with multiple or anonymous sexual partners increases your chance of exposure. Going to clubs, raves, saunas, sex parties and other places with skin-to-skin or face-to-face contact with many people may also increase your risk.

Who should get vaccinated?

The JYNNEOS vaccine has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the prevention of monkeypox. The vaccine requires two doses at least four weeks apart.

Visit cdc.gov/monkeypox to learn more about eligibility and where you can get vaccinated.

Is there treatment?

There is no specific treatment approved for monkeypox. Most people get better on their own without treatment. However, antivirals developed for use in patients with smallpox may prove beneficial.

What should I do if I have a new or unexpected rash or sores, or other symptoms?

Call your health care provider right away. If you do not have a provider, call 211. Tell your provider you are concerned about monkeypox. Your provider can check for symptoms and arrange for monkeypox testing.

To protect others:

- Follow the safer sex tips in this fact sheet, including avoiding physical contact until all rashes and sores have completely healed.
- Stay home (isolate) and separate from people in your household.
- If you cannot fully separate from others, wear a mask, avoid physical contact and wear clothing that covers your lesions when in shared spaces.
- Do not share or allow others to touch or use your clothing, towels or bedding.
- Do not share a bed.
- Do not share dishes, food, drink or utensils. Wash dishes with warm water and soap or in a dishwasher.
- Wash your hands often.
- Clean shared surfaces, such as countertops and doorknobs, often.
- Cover your rash or sores with clothing and wear a face mask if you must leave home for medical care or essential needs.

For more information, visit cdc.gov/monkeypox.

**The Meriden Department of Health and Human Services may change recommendations
as the situation evolves.**

