

# Monkeypox: Commonly Asked Questions

## What is Monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a rare disease caused by the monkeypox virus.

There are two types of monkeypox virus: West African and Congo Basin. Infections in the U.S. outbreak are from the West African type. Although this type rarely causes death, people might have permanent scarring from the rash.

Monkeypox is part of the same family of viruses that causes smallpox. The smallpox vaccine helped protect people against the monkeypox virus.

After the World Health Organization declared monkeypox eradicated (wiped out) in 1980, the vaccine was no longer given.

## Why is it Spreading Now?

In May 2022 an outbreak of monkeypox spread across several countries that don't normally report monkeypox, including the United States.

At this time, the risk of monkeypox in the United States is believed to be low. Currently, this outbreak is largely affecting gay, bisexual, or other men who have sex with men.

Monkeypox has been reported in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

The virus can be spread 3 ways by:

- direct contact:
  - with body fluids or skin lesions (from the monkeypox rash)
  - through respiratory droplets breathed in during extended intimate contact (kissing, face-to-face contact or sex)



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(Centers for Disease Control & Prevention website)

- from pregnant people to their fetuses
- touching items that were used by an infected person (such as clothing, bedding or towels)
- a bite or scratch from an infected animal:

## What are the Symptoms?

Symptoms of monkeypox include:

- rash that looks like pimples or blisters that appears on the face, inside the mouth, and on other parts of the body such as the hands, feet, chest, genitals or anus
  - The rash goes through different stages before fully healing.
    - It starts as a flat rash then changes to raised bumps filled with fluid.
    - The rash then crusts over and scabs develop.
- fever or chills
- headache
- body and muscle aches
- fatigue (feeling exhausted)
- sore throat, cough, nasal congestion
- swollen lymph nodes.

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## How Long Can Monkeypox be Spread?

Monkeypox can spread from the time symptoms start until the rash has fully healed and a new layer of skin has formed.

Symptoms usually appear 1 to 2 weeks after infection. The illness typically lasts 2 to 4 weeks.

People who do not have monkeypox symptoms cannot spread the virus to others.

## Who is at Risk for Getting it?

You can get monkeypox if you have close contact with a person who has it. You are more at risk for getting sick if you:

- have a weakened immune system (from having chemotherapy to treat cancer or taking immunosuppressive medicines for an organ transplant)
- are pregnant or breastfeeding
- have skin conditions such as eczema or psoriasis.

Children younger than 8 years old are also at risk.

At this time, the risk of monkeypox is believed to be low. It does not spread easily between people like other viruses such as influenza or a cold.

## When Should You See Your Health Care Provider?

Call your health care provider if you think you have monkeypox or if you have close contact with someone who has monkeypox.

Your health care provider will decide if you should be tested. They will swab your skin lesions or the inside of your mouth.

The samples will be sent to a lab for testing. Your health care provider will contact you with the results.

Contact your health care provider if you have any questions or concerns.

## What Should You Do if You Have Monkeypox or are Waiting for Your Test Results?

Until your health care provider gives you guidance:

- Avoid close contact (including intimate physical contact) with anyone.
- Avoid close contact with pets or other animals.
  - The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) does not currently believe that monkeypox poses a high risk to pets.
- In general, isolate yourself:
  - until your rash has healed, all scabs have fallen off and a new layer of intact skin has formed
  - if you have a fever, sore throat, nasal congestion or a cough.
- Only leave isolation to see your health care provider or for an emergency. If you need to leave isolation, cover the rash and wear a well-fitting mask.

## Can Monkeypox be Treated?

There are no treatments specifically for monkeypox virus infections. There are antiviral medicines used to treat smallpox that may be used to treat monkeypox infections.

Your health care provider will decide what is right for you.

## Is There a Vaccine for Monkeypox?

Vaccines that were developed to protect against smallpox viruses may be used to prevent monkeypox infections.

Vaccines may be recommended for:

- people who have had or may have contact with someone who has monkeypox
- health care and public health workers who may be exposed to the virus.

The vaccine is currently for people ages 18 years and older who do not have symptoms of monkeypox infection.

The vaccine prevents monkeypox infection 85 percent of the time if it is received within 4 days of exposure. If it is received after 4 days, the vaccine may not prevent infection but it will make the symptoms not as severe.

The CDC recommends vaccination for people who have been in close contact with people who have monkeypox.

You may be eligible for vaccination if you:

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

Health care providers with access to the vaccine are reaching out to their patients who meet these eligibility criteria and offering the vaccine. More people will be able to get vaccinated as the vaccine supply increases.

If you think you may be eligible for a vaccine, contact:

- your health care provider
- Minnesota Department of Health
  - [health.state.mn.us/diseases/monkeypox/vaccine.html](https://health.state.mn.us/diseases/monkeypox/vaccine.html)
- Wisconsin Department of Health & Services
  - [dhs.wisconsin.gov/monkeypox/vaccine.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/monkeypox/vaccine.htm).

## How Can You Help Prevent Getting or Spreading Monkeypox?

- Avoid close, skin-to-skin contact with people who have a rash that looks like monkeypox.
- Do not touch the rash or scabs of a person with monkeypox.

- Do not kiss, hug, cuddle or have any type of direct sexual contact with someone with monkeypox.
- Avoid contact with objects and materials that a person with monkeypox has used.
  - Do not share eating utensils or cups with a person with monkeypox.
  - Do not handle or touch the bedding, towels, or clothing of a person with monkeypox.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially before eating, touching your face, and after you use the bathroom.

## Are Crowded Events OK to Attend?

People can get monkeypox if they have close, skin-to-skin contact with someone who has monkeypox.

Early indications are that events with activities in which people engage in close, sustained skin-to-skin contact have resulted in cases of monkeypox.

If you plan to attend an event you know will be crowded, consider how much close, personal, skin-to-skin contact is likely to occur there.

## Are People Who Have HIV More Likely to Get Monkeypox?

The CDC doesn't know if having HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) increases the likelihood you would get monkeypox.

With the current outbreak, there does not appear to be more severe monkeypox illness in people who have HIV and are virally suppressed (having less than 200 copies of HIV per milliliter of blood).

If you have HIV, ask your health care provider if you should take antiviral medicine or receive a vaccination.

Data is limited, but most HIV treatment can be safely given with monkeypox treatment and smallpox vaccines. Tell your health care provider all of the medicines you take to help determine if any interactions exist.

## Resources

■ Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

— [cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/faq.html](https://cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/faq.html)



■ Minnesota Department of Health

— [health.state.mn.us/diseases/monkeypox/basics.html](https://health.state.mn.us/diseases/monkeypox/basics.html)



■ Wisconsin Department of Health Services

— [dhs.wisconsin.gov/monkeypox/index.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/monkeypox/index.htm)



■ World Health Organization

— [who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/monkeypox](https://who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/monkeypox)



**Information adapted by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, the Minnesota Department of Health, and the World Health Organization.**