



MONKEYPOX

What is Monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a rare zoonotic disease caused by infection with the Monkeypox virus (MPX). MPX belongs to the *Orthopoxvirus* genus in the family *Poxviridae*. The *Orthopoxvirus* genus also includes variola virus (which causes smallpox), vaccinia virus (used in the smallpox vaccine), and cowpox virus. It causes flu-like illness, followed by a rash that looks like pimples or blisters.

Until spring of 2022, MPX cases rarely occurred in the United States and were associated with international travel or importing animals from countries where the disease is more common. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the first time that human monkeypox was reported outside of Africa was in 2003, when a U.S. outbreak occurred from prairie dogs imported from Ghana. The Division of Public Health (DPH) announced Delaware's first case of MPX in a person on July 12, 2022, as part of a nationwide outbreak.

Transmission

MPX is transmitted through close contact with animals, people, and materials infected with the virus. The virus enters the body through broken skin (even if not visible), respiratory tract, or the mucous membranes (eyes, nose, or mouth). The incubation period is seven to 14 days. The illness lasts two to four weeks and is rarely fatal.

In the 2022 outbreak in the U.S., the primary mode of transmission was direct sexual or close intimate contact. MPX spreads by direct contact with the infectious rash, scabs, or body fluids or indirectly by touching contaminated clothing or linens. MPX also spreads from respiratory secretions during prolonged, face-to-face contact, or during intimate physical contact, such as kissing, cuddling, or sex. Pregnant people can spread the virus to their fetus through the placenta. People can get MPX from a scratch or bite from an infected animal and preparing or eating meat or using products from an infected animal.

Signs and Symptoms

Within three weeks of exposure to the virus, there may be flu-like symptoms including fever, headache, muscle aches, backache, swollen lymph nodes, chills, and exhaustion. Those with flu-like symptoms usually develop a rash one to four days later. The rash appears on the face, inside the mouth, and on the hands, feet, chest, genitals, or anus.

People who experience MPX symptoms should immediately contact their health care provider. They should avoid being intimate with others and self-isolate until all lesions have resolved, the scabs have fallen off, and a fresh layer of intact skin has formed.

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Diagnosis

A health care provider can preliminarily diagnosis MPX based on symptoms, travel to areas where MPX cases have been reported, and contact with a person with confirmed or suspected MPX or who has a MPX rash.

Treatment

Currently, there is no specific treatment for MPX virus infection. Instead, smallpox vaccine, antivirals, and vaccinia immune globulin (VIG) can be used.

Prevention

To prevent infection, avoid close, skin-to-skin contact such as touching, kissing, hugging, cuddling, or having sex with people with MPX or who have a rash that looks like MPX. Do not share eating utensils or cups with a person with MPX. Do not handle or touch the bedding, towels, or clothing of a person with MPX. Isolate infected patients and use personal protective equipment (PPE) when caring for MPX patients. Wash hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer after contact with infected people or animals. The CDC recommends that people with MPX avoid contacting animals and have someone else take care of their pets while they recover.

Avoid contact with alive and dead animals that could harbor the virus, including prairie dogs, monkeys, squirrels, groundhogs, chinchillas, and Giant-pouched rats. Avoid contact with any materials, such as bedding, that contacted a sick animal.

The CDC recommends vaccination for people who have been diagnosed with or exposed to MPX and for those at higher risk of exposure, including:

- People who have been identified as a contact of someone with MPX
- People who are aware that one of their sexual partners in the past two weeks was diagnosed with MPX
- People who had multiple sexual partners in the past two weeks in an area with known MPX
- People whose jobs may expose them to MPX, such as laboratory workers and some health care or public health workers.

For More Information

Visit <https://dhss.delaware.gov/dph/epi/emerginginfectiousdiseases.html> or call DPH's Office of Infectious Disease Epidemiology 24/7 emergency number at 888-295-5156.

For information about MPX in animals, visit the CDC at <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/veterinarian/monkeypox-in-animals.html>.

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