



Commonly Asked Questions About Monkeypox

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General Questions

What is [monkeypox \(MPX\)](#)?

MPX is a virus that causes flu-like symptoms and a painful rash. Since May 2022, cases have been identified in many countries, including the U.S.

How do you get MPX?

MPX can be passed from person to person through prolonged skin-to-skin contact (kissing, hugging, cuddling, dancing, sexual contact) with a person who has the virus or by touching or sharing objects, fabrics, or surfaces (e.g., clothes, bedsheets, cigarettes, vape pens, towels, etc.) with someone who is infected. It is spread through contact with scabs, rashes, and bodily fluids. It can also be spread by respiratory droplets (from coughing or sneezing), but this is less likely unless you are sharing space or caring for someone who has MPX. MPX can be spread from a pregnant person to their fetus through the placenta. An infected animal can also transmit MPX to humans through scratches, bites, or contact with active MPX sores.

What are the signs and symptoms of MPX?

Signs and symptoms of MPX may appear differently over the course of infection.

Some people may experience initial symptoms—which can take up to a couple of weeks to appear after exposure—that resemble flu-like symptoms such as fever, chills, swollen lymph nodes, exhaustion, muscle and back aches, headache, and respiratory symptoms (e.g., sore throat, nasal congestion, or cough).

A rash may develop within a few days after the start of these flu-like symptoms. An MPX rash can look like pimples or blisters and can be itchy and painful. The rash can appear anywhere on the body, including the genitals.

Some people may get a rash first and then experience flu-like symptoms. Others may only experience a rash.

How severe is MPX illness?

Some people will have a mild infection with painful sores. Others will have more serious complications. People with [immunocompromising conditions](#) should take extra care if they test positive for MPX.

How is MPX treated?

In most cases, MPX will resolve on its own in 2–4 weeks. Supportive care like pain management may be available if needed. In some [severe cases](#), medication like [TPOXX](#) may be prescribed.

How long is MPX contagious?

MPX can spread from the time symptoms start until the rash has healed. That means it can be contagious for up to 4 weeks and can be spread until the rash has completely healed. This means all scabs have fallen off and a fresh layer of skin has formed underneath.

How can people protect themselves from MPX?

1. Avoid close, skin-to-skin contact with someone who has a rash that looks like small pimples or blisters, people who are waiting for MPX test results, and people who have confirmed MPX. Do not kiss, hug, cuddle, or have sex with someone who has suspected or confirmed MPX.

2. Do not share food and drink, utensils, cups, or plates with anyone. Do not share personal items such as bedsheets, towels, or clothes with anyone. If you must share items with other people, make sure they are washed, cleaned, or disinfected before being shared.
3. Wash your hands often or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Are there vaccines for MPX?

Yes. At the moment, vaccine doses are limited and jurisdictions are prioritizing people who have been exposed to MPX or those who are at high risk of exposure in a setting with known cases. Shelters should contact their local health department to discuss eligibility. If a person is eligible, the vaccine is available at no cost.

Vaccines available for MPX have been studied and administered around the world for many years. If someone is vaccinated for MPX, they may experience some side effects (such as pain, redness, or swelling at the injection site; muscle pain; headache; fatigue; nausea; or chills) for a few days after vaccination, but this is the body's immune system responding and building protection.

Who is at risk of severe disease from MPX?

Young children (under 8 years of age), individuals who are pregnant or immunocompromised, and individuals with a history of atopic dermatitis or eczema may be at an especially [increased risk of severe outcomes from MPX](#). Those who have HIV but are not taking medications are [at higher risk of complications](#). If a person thinks they may have MPX, it is important to be evaluated right away by a healthcare provider who can support the individual and talk through the risk for severe disease.

What happens if a person has MPX while pregnant?

[MPX can be transmitted to the fetus during pregnancy or to the newborn](#) by close contact during and after birth. If a person is pregnant and suspected to have MPX, have that person see a healthcare provider.

Provider-Specific Questions

I read on social media that only gay men are contracting the virus. Since our shelter is mostly families, are our residents at risk of getting MPX?

While many of the early MPX cases in the U.S. occurred among gay, bisexual, and other men who reported sexual contact with men, [anyone can get MPX](#). Cases have been identified across many different age groups, sexual orientations, gender identities, races, and ethnicities.

What should staff and residents do if they think they have MPX?

Shelter guests who think they have been exposed to MPX or have flu-like symptoms or a rash should ask the shelter staff for help contacting a healthcare professional. Staff who think they have been exposed or have MPX symptoms should not return to work and should contact their healthcare professional. Visiting a healthcare professional will allow a person to get the testing, care, and treatment they need to feel better.

Anyone who thinks they might have MPX should wear a well-fitting mask over their nose and mouth, wear long sleeves and pants to cover any exposed skin that has a rash, and wash their hands frequently. This will help protect friends, family, and other people from getting sick while the individual waits for test results.

What happens if shelter residents are diagnosed with MPX?

Ideally, people who test positive should isolate until all sores have healed and new skin has formed, which can take up to 4 weeks. [Multiple guests who test positive for MPX can isolate together in the same room](#). Some shelters may [provide isolation](#) onsite while others may move guests offsite to isolate themselves. MPX can be extremely painful. Use harm reduction approaches to address a full range of health care needs including chronic medical, behavioral health, and substance use disorders.

If communities do not have enough resources to support people who test positive for MPX through a full isolation period, it is important to ensure all other prevention strategies are maximized. If unable to be isolated away from others, people with MPX should wear a well-fitting mask over their nose and mouth and make sure the rash is completely covered with long sleeves, pants, gowns, or other dressings. People with MPX who are not able to isolate should wash their hands often and avoid touching their rash. People should be mindful not to

share or touch other peoples' clothing, bedding, towels, utensils, and personal and hygiene items, and everyone should use extra caution when utilizing public transportation or accessing other social support services.

Does someone with MPX have to isolate from their pets?

While the level of risk for household pets is not fully known, infected animals can spread the MPX virus to people, and it is possible that people who are infected can spread the virus to animals through close contact, including petting, cuddling, hugging, kissing, licking, sharing sleeping areas, and sharing food. MPX has been transmitted from people to their household pets. If someone tests positive for MPX, they [may need to take extra precautions to protect their pet](#).

Should my shelter increase cleaning protocols?

Yes. Shelters should enhance their [disinfection protocols](#), as the virus can live on surfaces for [up to 15 days](#). Shelters should also communicate with local public health as soon as they are aware that someone with suspected or confirmed MPX has spent time in their facility.

How should laundry be done for someone with MPX?

Soiled laundry should be promptly contained in a laundry bag and gently handled so as not to disperse infectious material. Linens should be laundered using regular detergent and warm water.

When handling laundry from people with suspected or confirmed MPX, staff, volunteers, or residents should wear full personal protective equipment (PPE), including a well-fitting mask or respirator, gloves, eye protection, and a gown. If you are unsure if people in your facility have monkeypox, anyone responsible for laundry should consider wearing PPE. If guests do their own laundry, they should clean any shared surfaces or objects in the laundry room (such as machine buttons or knobs, door handles, detergent bottles, etc.).

Linens may be reused after washing.

Can we use ESG or ESG-CV to pay for hotel/motel rooms?

Yes, eligible Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) program participants with MPX can be placed in hotel/motel rooms if that is the most appropriate way to address their needs. Both Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act ESG (ESG-CV) funds and FY20 and older annual ESG funds designated for coronavirus response can be used to pay for such costs. To be eligible to receive assistance in the form of hotel/motel costs (directly or through vouchers) and other related shelter operations costs, individuals or families must be experiencing homelessness, receiving rapid rehousing under the Continuum of Care or ESG program, receiving homelessness prevention under the ESG program, or residing in permanent supportive housing. In addition, annual ESG funds NOT designated for coronavirus response can be used to pay for a hotel or motel voucher for a family or individual with MPX if no appropriate emergency shelter is available.

Note: ESG recipients may designate FY20 and older annual funds for COVID-19 response by meeting the conditions in Section IV of [Notice CPD-21-08](#).

Can we use ESG or ESG-CV to pay vaccine incentives?

No, Notice CPD-21-08 restricts vaccine incentives for people experiencing homelessness receiving a coronavirus vaccine. ESG funds cannot otherwise fund vaccine incentives.

Further resources

[FAQ with general MPX information from New Hampshire Health and Human Services](#)

[FAQ with medical questions from the Cleveland Clinic](#)

[CDC Information about Graduated Isolation Practices](#)

[FAQ about sexual health related to MPX from Building Healthy Online Communities](#)

[Interim Guidance for Prevention and Treatment of MPX in Persons with HIV Infection](#)