

MPOX (MONKEYPOX)

What is Mpox?

Mpox (previously known as monkeypox) is a rare viral illness. The virus is similar to smallpox but mpox is less contagious and has milder symptoms.

Most people recover from mpox on their own within two to four weeks. However, some people can get very sick. The origin of the disease is unknown, but it is mostly found in central and western Africa. More recently, the virus has spread to other countries, including Canada.

What are the symptoms of mpox?

Early symptoms include:

- Headache
- Back pain
- Fever
- Exhaustion
- Muscle aches
- Sore throat and cough

A rash often appears within a few days after symptoms begin, starting on the face and spreading to other parts of the body, and may last two to four weeks.

If you think you have mpox, you should self-isolate and contact your health care provider to get tested. Please let your provider know about your health status before your visit.

How does mpox spread?

Mpox is a disease spread by direct contact with the virus. Household members and intimate contacts are considered close contacts and most at risk. Mpox is not limited to any specific group.

The disease is typically transmitted through contact with body fluids, such as fluids from mpox sores. More rarely, it can be transmitted through contaminated clothing or bedding or through respiratory droplets following prolonged face-to-face contact. It can also spread through bites or scratches from infected animals.

Based upon current mpox outbreak data, most cases have occurred in people who self-identify as gay or bisexual, and in men who report sexual or intimate contact with other men (gbMSM), but anyone can get mpox through close contact with a person who is infected with the virus.

Mpox is considered most infectious from the onset of the initial lesions until scabs have fallen off and new skin is present. Some cases may be infectious during their early symptoms (prodrome) such as when experiencing fever, malaise or headache before the rash develops.

The incubation period, which is the time an individual is exposed to the virus, until symptoms develop, is typically six to 13 days but can range from five to 21 days.

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How is mpox treated?

Most people do not require treatment for mpox, and symptoms resolve on their own; however, severe illness can occur in some individuals. In emergency situations, treatment for smallpox can be used to treat individuals with mpox.

How can mpox be prevented?

Vaccination is the best protection against mpox and may be offered to individuals at high risk of mpox infection, such as after exposure to someone infected with mpox or in individuals with risk factors for getting the infection, as determined by Public Health in partnership with health care providers. If you are symptomatic, stay home and discuss options with your health care provider.