

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a rare disease caused by infection with the monkeypox virus. Monkeypox was first discovered in 1958 when two outbreaks of a pox-like disease occurred in colonies of monkeys kept for research, hence the name "monkeypox." The first case in humans was found in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Since then, more cases have been found in central and western African countries with most infections being found in Democratic Republic of Congo. Rarely, monkeypox cases have been found in countries outside of Africa that were associated with international travel or importing animals from areas where the disease is more common. Monkeypox is a zoonotic disease, meaning that it can be spread from animals to people. The natural reservoir of monkeypox remains unknown.

### Who gets monkeypox?

Anyone can get monkeypox, but most cases occur in central and western Africa. As of spring 2022, clusters of monkeypox cases have been seen in several countries that don't normally have cases of the disease including parts of Europe and North America. Most of the recent cases do not have direct travel-exposure risks.

### What are the symptoms of monkeypox?

The most common early symptoms are similar to the flu and may include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Backache
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Chills

As the infection continues, additional symptoms may include:

- Blister-like rash (however, sometimes the rash appears before the early symptoms above)
- Fever
- Drenching sweats
- Muscle aches
- Headache

The incubation period (time from being infected to the time symptoms appear) is usually 7-14 days, but can range from 5-21 days. People who have weak immune systems or skin conditions such as eczema may experience more serious illness or complications.

### How is monkeypox spread?

Monkeypox can be spread when a person comes into contact with the virus from an animal, human, or materials (such as bedding or clothing) that have been contaminated with the virus. Monkeypox can be spread from animal to person by bite or scratch, bush meat preparation, or contact with lesion material. People with monkeypox can spread it to other people through prolonged face-to-face contact, direct contact with the lesions or body fluids, or through touching things that have come into contact with the rash on the infected person's body such as bedding, clothing, or towels.

## **How is monkeypox diagnosed?**

If a health care provider suspects that a patient has monkeypox, a sample from the rash will be collected and sent to the NJ Public Health and Environmental Laboratory for initial testing to know if it is in the same pox virus family as monkeypox. Further testing will likely need to be done by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to confirm if it is monkeypox.

## **What is the treatment for monkeypox?**

There is no standard treatment for monkeypox and most people will get better on their own. There are antiviral drugs that are FDA-approved for treating smallpox that may be used to help control an outbreak of monkeypox.

## **Can people with monkeypox pass the illness to others?**

People with monkeypox develop a rash that fills with fluid and then forms a scab (the rash will go through four stages before scabs fall off and this process takes about 2-3 weeks). The fluid, and any other material from the rash, can spread the virus to others. Monkeypox is spread from person to person through close contact with an infected person, or animal, or by touching things that may have come in contact with the rash on infected person's body such as clothing, towels, or bedding. The virus can also spread through respiratory droplets if there is prolonged face-to-face contact with an infected person.

## **How can monkeypox be prevented?**

There are things that can prevent infection with monkeypox:

- Avoid contact with animals that may have the virus, including animals that are sick or have been found dead in areas where monkeypox occurs
- Avoid contact with any materials, such as bedding, towels, clothing, etc. that has been in contact with an infected person or sick animal
- Isolate infected people from others who could be at risk for infections
- Wash your hands well with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer after contact with infected people or animals
- Use personal protective equipment (PPE) when caring for someone who is infected

## **Is there a vaccine for monkeypox?**

Yes. There is a vaccine called JYNNEOS™ (also known as Imvamune or Imvanex). It is a live virus vaccine that is approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for the prevention of monkeypox.

## **What should I do if I think I might have monkeypox?**

- If you think you might have monkeypox seek medical care immediately.
- Call ahead before you arrive at a doctor's office, urgent care center, or hospital so that they can be ready to isolate you from other people.

- Wear a mask to prevent the spread of respiratory droplets.
- Monkeypox rashes that occur in the genital or anal area may look like herpes or syphilis so be sure to tell your healthcare provider if you were in contact with someone who had/has monkeypox

### **Does monkeypox affect pets?**

Based on cases that have been studied in the past, it is not believed that monkeypox infects domestic pets. As additional cases and clusters of monkeypox are found, the potential for infection of pets will be monitored closely to learn quickly if any animals in the U.S. become a reservoir for this virus.

### **Where can I get more information?**

- Your health care provider
- Your local health department
- NJ Department of Health <http://www.nj.gov/health>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<http://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/index/html>

This information is intended for educational purposes only and is not intended to replace consultation with a health care professional.

Adapted from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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