



MONKEYPOX

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a contagious disease caused by the monkeypox virus. The monkeypox virus is in the same family of viruses as variola, the virus that causes smallpox. Monkeypox and smallpox symptoms are similar, but monkeypox symptoms are milder and rarely fatal. Monkeypox is not related to chickenpox.

Monkeypox was first discovered in 1958 in colonies of monkeys kept for research. The first case in humans was recorded in 1970. Previously, monkeypox had been reported in people in several central and western African countries. Almost all monkeypox cases in people in the United States were linked to international travel to countries where the disease is known to occur or through imported animals.

Since May 2022, however, there has been a large outbreak of monkeypox in many countries, including the United States. The main way people are becoming infected is through close, intimate contact with symptomatic people, mainly during sexual activity. While some people can get very sick, most people do not need hospital care and recover in 2-4 weeks. Vaccines and antiviral treatment are available for monkeypox.

The following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are about the US 2022 monkeypox outbreak.

2. What are the signs and symptoms of monkeypox?

Monkeypox symptoms usually start within 3 weeks of exposure to the virus.

The most common symptom is a rash that may:

- Look like bumps, pimples, blisters, or scabs. It will go through several stages before healing. Generally, the rash starts as red, flat spots, and then becomes bumps. Those bumps can then become filled with fluid which turns to pus. The bumps then crust into a scab.
- Be on or near the genitals (penis, testicles, labia, and vagina), anus (butthole), mouth, or other areas like the hands, feet, chest, and face.
- Spread over the body or it may be limited to one area. There may be just a few bumps or blisters.
- Be painful and/or itchy. Some people have severe pain, especially if the rash is inside their mouth or anus.

People may also develop flu-like symptoms in addition to the rash. These can appear 1-4 days before the rash starts or after the rash starts. They include fever/chills, swollen lymph nodes, exhaustion, muscle aches, and headache.

Most people with monkeypox recover in 2-4 weeks.

To see monkeypox rash photos visit these FAQs at ph.lacounty.gov/monkeypox.

3. How does monkeypox spread?

The main way monkeypox has been spreading is through close, intimate contact with symptomatic people, mainly during sexual activity.



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Monkeypox can be spread by:

- Direct skin-to-skin contact with the sores or scabs from a person with monkeypox.
- Direct contact with the body fluids or respiratory secretions from a person with monkeypox, such as drainage from skin sores or saliva that was in contact with mouth sores.
- Getting stuck/punctured by a sharp object (such as a needle) that has touched the sores or body fluids of a person with monkeypox.
- Touching materials (such as bedding, towels, clothing) that touched the sores or body fluids of a person with monkeypox and have not been cleaned. (Note: the CDC states that the risk of getting monkeypox this way is low).

A person with monkeypox can spread it to others from the time symptoms start until the rash has fully healed and a fresh layer of skin has formed. This usually takes 2 to 4 weeks.

A pregnant person with monkeypox can spread the virus to their fetus through the placenta. The virus can also be spread to the baby by close contact during and after birth.

Scientists are still researching more about how monkeypox is spread, including:

- If the virus can be spread when someone does not have [symptoms](#) (so far there is no evidence that this is happening)
- How often it spreads through respiratory secretions
- Whether monkeypox can be spread through semen, vaginal fluids, urine, or feces.

See CDC [How Monkeypox Spreads](#) for additional information.

4. Who is at risk for monkeypox?

In this current outbreak in the U.S., the vast majority of people diagnosed with monkeypox are men who reported having sexual or close intimate contact with other men. But anyone, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, is at risk if they have close, intimate skin-to-skin contact with someone with symptomatic monkeypox.

As this is a new outbreak, public health organizations nationally and internationally are still learning about the situations or behaviors that may put people at increased risk. We will continue to share information as we learn more. More information is in the CDC [Science Brief: Detection and Transmission of Monkeypox Virus](#).

5. How is monkeypox treated?

There are no FDA approved medicines to specifically treat monkeypox. But an FDA approved antiviral medicine used to treat smallpox called tecovirimat (or TPOXX) can be used to treat people with monkeypox. TPOXX can be given to people with severe monkeypox, including lesions in sensitive areas or pain that is not controlled with over-the-counter remedies. It can also be given to people who are more likely to get severely ill (see *Who might be at higher risk for getting very sick?* below). Learn more at CDC [Patient's Guide to Monkeypox Treatment with TPOXX](#).



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If you have monkeypox, your doctor can also prescribe non-monkeypox medicines that can help reduce pain and irritation from the rash or sores. For information on how to manage your symptoms, visit the CDC webpage [What to Do If You Are Sick](#).

6. What is severe monkeypox?

Many people with monkeypox have a mild illness, but for some people monkeypox can be serious. Signs of severe monkeypox can include:

- Rash or sores on or near the eyes
- Rash that spreads all over the body or blend together
- Pain in the rectum (butt) or urethra (pee hole) that makes it hard to go to the bathroom
- Pain in the mouth that makes it hard to eat and drink
- Rash that is bleeding or looks infected
- Symptoms that get worse or do not improve over time

Seek medical help right away if you get any of these symptoms or have other symptoms that concern you. If you have uncontrolled or advanced HIV, see a doctor right away, even if your monkeypox symptoms seem mild.

7. Who is at higher risk for getting very sick?

People living with uncontrolled or advanced HIV are at high risk for becoming severely ill if they get monkeypox. Other people who are very immunosuppressed are also considered high risk for becoming very ill.

People with monkeypox who have lesions in their eyes, mouth, rectum, and/or genitals can have severe pain and swelling. These areas can become infected with bacteria. There is also a risk of scarring.

In addition, based on what we know from previous monkeypox outbreaks, the following groups may be at higher risk for getting severe monkeypox, if they become infected. We don't yet know the extent of their risk for getting very sick if infected during the current outbreak.

- People who are immunosuppressed (have a weak immune system because of a treatment, disease, or infection).
- People with a disease or condition that affects the skin such as eczema, atopic dermatitis, psoriasis, impetigo, severe acne, herpes, or burns.
- Children, particularly those who are under 8 years of age.
- People who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

During this outbreak, most of the people with monkeypox have been adult men who have not required hospitalization. However, there have been very severe monkeypox cases, including some deaths, in people with severely immunocompromised immune systems. This includes people living with untreated or uncontrolled HIV infection.



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8. What should I do if I think I have monkeypox?

Contact your doctor right away if you have a new, unexplained, rash or lesions on any part of your body. This is especially important if you were exposed to someone with monkeypox or suspected to have monkeypox. Cover all parts of the rash with clothing, gloves, and/or bandages and take steps to protect others. These include avoiding skin to skin contact and being physically intimate with others until you have been checked out by a doctor. Be sure to wear a mask when you see a doctor.

Call the Public Health Call Center at 1-833-540-0473 (open daily 8:00 am to 8:30 pm) if you don't have a doctor or health insurance. If you have a rash, you can also access services at Public Health's Sexual Health Clinics (see schedule [here](#)).

Until you know you don't have monkeypox, take steps to reduce the risk of spreading the infection by staying away from others. See [Isolation Instructions for People with Monkeypox](#).

9. How do you test for monkeypox?

If you have a rash that might be due to monkeypox, your doctor will evaluate you. Based on their assessment, they may swab your rash for testing. The swabs are sent to a lab, and the test result should be available in a few days. There are no self-tests or home tests for monkeypox at this time.

Until you know you don't have monkeypox, it is important to follow [monkeypox isolation instructions](#).

10. What should I do if I am diagnosed with monkeypox?

If you have been diagnosed with monkeypox, you should isolate to protect others. Follow the [Isolation Instructions for People with Monkeypox](#) which are available in several languages at ph.lacounty.gov/monkeypox.

Contact your sex partners and any people you had very close, intimate and/or prolonged contact with since your symptoms started. Do this as soon as possible so they can consider getting [vaccinated](#) (if they have not already had monkeypox or not already been vaccinated for monkeypox). Getting vaccinated after exposure may prevent monkeypox or make the illness less severe. They can also look out for any symptoms of monkeypox.

Please answer calls from Public Health. They will be in touch to ask you about your activities before and after you developed symptoms. This is to try to find out how you may have been exposed to monkeypox and to help to identify other people who may have been exposed.

11. How can I reduce my risk of getting monkeypox?

There are a number of ways to reduce the risk of monkeypox:

- Get vaccinated if you are eligible (see below)
- Avoid very close intimate contact with someone with monkeypox symptoms, especially:
 - Oral, anal, and vaginal sex, or touching the genitals or anus
 - Hugging, cuddling, massaging, and/or kissing
 - Skin-to-skin contact with the rash on their body.



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- Sharing towels, clothing, bedding, blankets, or other objects and materials (e.g., toothbrushes, cups, utensils, and sex toys) that have not been cleaned.
- Wash your hands, fetish gear, sex toys, and any fabrics (bedding, towels, clothes) after having sex.
- Wear appropriate protective equipment (mask, gloves, and gown) if you cannot avoid close contact with someone who has monkeypox symptoms.
- Talk to sexual partner(s) about any recent illness and new or unexplained sores or rashes including on the genitals or anus.
- Use a condom. Condoms alone are likely not enough to prevent monkeypox. But they might reduce the risk, and may help prevent sores in sensitive areas, like the anus, mouth, or genitals.
- Reduce the number of sex partners.
- Avoid riskier activities such as anonymous sex and sex parties.

For more information see the CDC webpage, [Safer Sex, Social Gatherings and Monkeypox](#).

12. Is there a vaccine for monkeypox?

Yes. A vaccine called JYNNEOS is FDA approved to prevent monkeypox in people ages 18 and over. It is also available under FDA emergency use authorization (EUA) for people under age 18. It is a two-dose vaccine. It takes 14 days after getting the second dose of JYNNEOS to get the best immune response to the vaccine. But even getting one dose can provide some protection. It is important to note, neither one nor two doses of vaccine are 100% effective at preventing infection. It is still important to continue to take other steps to reduce your risk.

If the vaccine is given before a person is exposed to monkeypox, it helps to protect them from getting monkeypox.

If it is given after exposure, it may help to prevent the disease or make it less severe. It should be given within 14 days of exposure (ideally in the first 4 days).

If someone already has monkeypox the vaccine is not recommended. For more information about the vaccine, see [Monkeypox vaccine FAQs](#).

13. Who is eligible for the monkeypox vaccine?

Vaccine is now available to:

- Any man or transgender person who has sex with men or transgender people
- People of any gender or sexual orientation who engage in commercial and/or transactional sex (e.g., sex in exchange for money, shelter, food, or other goods or needs) or have sex in association with a large public event
- People living with HIV, especially persons with uncontrolled or advanced HIV disease
- People who had skin-to-skin or intimate contact with someone with suspected or confirmed monkeypox, including those who have not yet been confirmed by Public Health
- Sexual partners of people in any of the above groups
- People who anticipate being in any of the above groups.

Eligibility may be expanded to other groups in future – for the latest information, see ph.lacounty.gov/monkeypox/vaccine.htm.



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14. How can I get vaccinated?

If you are in one of the groups eligible for monkeypox vaccination, go to a [Public Health Vaccination Site](#) or visit Myturn.ca.gov to find a site near you. When you go to the location, be prepared to attest that you meet the eligibility criteria to receive a monkeypox vaccine.

Visit ph.lacounty.gov/monkeypox/vaccine.htm to see if you are eligible for vaccination.

See [Monkeypox vaccine FAQs](#) for more information on JYNNEOS vaccination.

15. What should I do if I am exposed to monkeypox?

Track your health. People who develop monkeypox usually get symptoms 7-14 days (and up to 21 days) after being exposed. You can continue your routine daily activities as long as you do not develop symptoms. Be prepared to isolate yourself from others if you develop monkeypox symptoms.

Get vaccinated if you have not already completed a two-dose monkeypox series. Getting a dose of monkeypox vaccine within 4 days after exposure can help prevent you from becoming infected. Getting a vaccine 4-14 days after exposure may make your infection less severe. Learn more at ph.lacounty.gov/monkeypox/vaccine.htm.

Please answer calls from Public Health. If you are named as a contact to someone with monkeypox, Public Health may be in touch with you to see how you are feeling and to offer vaccination if appropriate.

Follow [Guidance for Individuals Who Have Been Exposed to Monkeypox](#) for more information.

16. What can people with HIV do to protect themselves from monkeypox?

People living with HIV should follow the same recommendations as everyone else to protect themselves from getting monkeypox. However, there are additional steps that people with HIV should take. This is because there is more and more evidence that monkeypox infection can be more severe for people living with HIV who have low CD4 counts (<350 cells/ml) or an unsuppressed viral load.

What can you do to protect yourself?

- Get the monkeypox vaccine. The vaccine is safe and can be given either between the layers of the skin (intradermally) or beneath the skin (subcutaneously).
- Avoid direct contact with the rash or secretions of people with monkeypox. See *How can I reduce my risk of getting monkeypox?*
- Make sure that you have your HIV infection under control. It is important that you take your antiretroviral therapy (ART) regularly as instructed. If you need assistance with finding an HIV doctor or making an appointment, Public Health staff are available to help - visit ph.lacounty.gov/dhsp/RapidART.htm or call 1-833-351-2298.

What should you do if you think you may have monkeypox?

- If you do develop a new rash or sores that you think may be monkeypox, see a doctor right away. Let them know you have HIV.



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- If your doctor suspects monkeypox, they may start you on antiviral treatment for monkeypox ([TPOXX](#)) right away, especially if you have uncontrolled or advanced HIV. If your HIV is well controlled but you have monkeypox lesions in your eyes, mouth, rectum, or penis, they may recommend starting TPOXX to lower the risk of pain, infection, and scarring.
- If you are prescribed TPOXX, it is very important that you take it as instructed.
- For more information see *What should I do if I think I have monkeypox?*

Visit [HIV.gov](https://www.hiv.gov) [Monkeypox Update](#) for more information about monkeypox and HIV.

17. Can kids get monkeypox?

Yes. Anyone can get monkeypox if they have close, personal or intimate contact with someone who has monkeypox. The risk of children getting infected with monkeypox during this outbreak is very low. While cases in children have happened in the U.S., they are very rare.

Younger children are at risk of getting monkeypox if they live with someone who has monkeypox, especially if there is any skin-to-skin contact with the infected person. If you have monkeypox or suspected monkeypox, take steps to protect everyone in your home. See [Isolation Instructions for People with Monkeypox](#).

Adolescents who are physically intimate/sexually active with others may also be at higher risk of getting monkeypox. This is especially true if they are males having sex with other males. For more information see the CDC webpage, [Safer Sex, Social Gatherings and Monkeypox](#).

18. What kind of cleaning products work against monkeypox?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has a list of disinfectant products that are registered for use against the monkeypox virus. The list includes popular products that many businesses and individuals already use. It can be found on the [EPA website](#). The website has a search tool where you can look up disinfectants by different factors such as product name, contact time, and surface type.

- Check that the product is EPA-registered
- Read the manufacturer's directions. Make sure this is the right product for your surface.
- Clean the surface with soap and water if the directions mention pre-cleaning before applying disinfectant or if the surface is visibly dirty. Dirt can keep the disinfectant from working.
- Follow the contact time instructions. The surface should remain wet for the amount of time stated in the instructions to be effective. Reapply if needed.

Regular laundry detergents can be used for cleaning clothes or linens (e.g., bedding and towels) used by someone with monkeypox.

Soiled dishes and eating utensils can be washed in a dishwasher with detergent and hot water or by hand with hot water and dish soap.

See CDC [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Home, Workplace, and Other Community Settings](#) for more information and tips about cleaning during and after monkeypox.



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19. Where can I go for more information?

Los Angeles County, Department of Public Health

ph.lacounty.gov/monkeypox

ph.lacounty.gov/monkeypox/vaccine.htm

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/index.html

California Department of Public Health

cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Monkeypox.aspx

