



MONKEYPOX

Frequently Asked Questions for Parents

What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a contagious disease caused by the monkeypox virus. It was discovered in 1958 when two outbreaks of a pox-like disease arose in colonies of monkeys kept for research. The first human case of monkeypox was recorded in 1970. It was rarely seen in the United States or many other countries until May 2022.

There are 2 types of monkeypox virus. The type that is currently in the US is less severe. The most common symptom is a rash, which may or may not be associated with flu-like symptoms. Most people do not need hospital care and recover in 2-4 weeks. Vaccines and antiviral treatment are available for monkeypox. More general information about monkeypox is available at:

- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LAC DPH) monkeypox website ph.lacounty.gov/monkeypox
- [CDC Frequently Asked Questions](#) on monkeypox

What are the 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, sores, or scabs. The infection can last for 2-4 weeks until all the scabs fall off and new skin forms over the lesions.
- 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 (butthole).

People may also develop flu-like symptoms. These can appear 1-4 days before or after the rash starts. They include fever/chills, swollen glands, low energy, muscle aches, and headache. Not everyone who develops the rash has these symptoms.

Most people with monkeypox recover in 2-4 weeks.

Although the risk for most people remains low, anyone who develops a new unexplained rash or skin lesions should contact their doctor. People can also call the Public Health Call Center at 1-833-540-0473 (open daily 8:00 am to 8:30 pm) if they do not have a doctor or health insurance.

More information about symptoms is available at the LAC DPH page [Monkeypox Symptoms](#).

How does monkeypox spread?

Monkeypox is known to spread by close, intimate and/or prolonged contact, including:

- Direct skin-to-skin contact with the rash, scabs, or body fluids from a person with monkeypox
- Contact with objects and fabrics that have been used by someone with monkeypox
- Contact with respiratory secretions from someone with monkeypox



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This can happen from:

- Sex and other intimate contact, including kissing, massaging, cuddling
- Sharing fabrics and objects (such as clothes, bedding, towels, toys) that have not been cleaned
- Prolonged, close, face-to-face contact such as talking very closely face to face for a long time (about 3 hours or more)
- Living in a house, sharing a bed, or caring for someone with monkeypox

A person with monkeypox can spread it to others from the time symptoms start until the rash has healed, scabs have fallen off, and there is a new layer of skin. This usually takes 2 to 4 weeks.

A pregnant person with monkeypox can spread the virus to their fetus through the placenta.

Monkeypox is much less contagious than COVID-19. It is NOT spread through casual conversations or by walking by someone who has it.

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

- If the virus can be spread when someone does not have [symptoms](#),
- How often it spreads through respiratory secretions, and
- Any other types of interactions or behaviors that may put people at higher risk.

See ph.lacounty.gov/monkeypox for more details and the latest information.

How are monkeypox and COVID-19 different?

Although this sudden appearance of a monkeypox outbreak in the U.S. can be concerning after over two years of living through the COVID-19 pandemic, monkeypox is much less contagious than COVID-19. The overall risk to the public of getting monkeypox is currently very low.

COVID-19 was a new virus first noted in 2019. Monkeypox is not new and has been known about for many years.

Monkeypox also does not spread in the same way as COVID-19.

- The main way that monkeypox is spreading during this outbreak is through close, intimate and/or prolonged skin-to-skin contact with someone with monkeypox.
- The main way that the COVID-19 virus spreads is through tiny droplets in the air that are released, for example, when we breath, talk, sneeze, or cough. A person can spread the COVID-19 virus even when they do not have symptoms.

There is already a vaccine and antiviral medicine for monkeypox.

For more information visit [Monkeypox vs. COVID-19](#) at the California Department of Public Health website.

Is my child at risk for getting monkeypox?

No, unless they have been in close, personal 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.



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Children are at higher risk of getting monkeypox if they live with someone who has monkeypox, especially if they share a bed or other items 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 or in situations like parties where they might have skin-to-skin contact are also at higher risk of getting monkeypox. This is especially true if they are doing these activities with persons who belong to the groups where monkeypox is spreading. For more information see the CDC's [Safer Sex, Social Gatherings and Monkeypox](#) webpage.

Information about monkeypox in children is limited because it is so rare, but there is evidence that monkeypox illness can be more serious in children under 8 years of age. It is also more severe in those who have weakened immune systems or have certain skin conditions, such as eczema.

Are there testing options for children who might be infected with monkeypox?

Yes. Contact your doctor if you think your child or anyone else in your household may have monkeypox. You can also call the Public Health Call Center at 1-833-540-0473 (open daily 8:00 am to 8:30 pm) if your child does not have a doctor or health insurance. If your child has a new unexplained rash and the doctor thinks it may be due to monkeypox, they can swab the lesions. The swabs are sent to a laboratory for testing.

Remember that rashes are common in children and can be caused by many different things. As monkeypox is so rare in children, most rashes are likely to be caused by something else. If the rash does not look like monkeypox, the doctor may not do a test especially if they suspect a different cause and/or the child has no known or suspected exposure to someone with monkeypox.

For more information on monkeypox testing, visit the LACDPH Monkeypox website at ph.lacounty.gov/monkeypox.

Are there treatment options for children who might be infected with monkeypox?

Yes. If a child is infected with monkeypox, they can be treated. Many people with monkeypox have a mild illness and recover without any antiviral treatment.

There is an FDA-approved antiviral medicine used to treat smallpox called tecovirimat (or TPOXX, pronounced TEE-pocks) that can be used to treat people with monkeypox. The viruses that cause smallpox and monkeypox come from the same family of viruses, so the medication is useful against both.

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 with monkeypox who are more likely to get severely ill. Children, especially those under 8 years of age may be at higher risk for getting severely ill if they get monkeypox.



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What will happen if there is a case of monkeypox at my child's school or childcare?

It is possible for anyone to catch monkeypox if they have close, personal contact with an infected person. However, at this time, the risk in schools and childcare settings is very low. Just sitting in a classroom with someone who has monkeypox symptoms presents very low risk of being exposed and becoming infected.

If your child or adolescent was identified as exposed to monkeypox at school, LAC DPH will work with the school to give guidance on what to do next for anyone who was or may have been exposed.

Most students can continue to attend school and other school-related activities even if they have had close contact with someone with monkeypox as long as they do not develop symptoms.

Does my child have to stay home from school or childcare if they are infected with the monkeypox virus?

A person with monkeypox can spread it to others from the time symptoms start until the rash has healed, scabs have fallen off, and there is a new layer of skin. This usually takes 2 to 4 weeks.

It is important that people with monkeypox follow the [Isolation Instructions for People with Monkeypox](#). They must stay at home and away from others while they are most infectious. Once they have met specific criteria, they may start doing certain activities outside the home as long as those do not involve close physical contact with others.

All children should stay home if they are suspected to have monkeypox until a doctor has evaluated them and the results of any tests that are taken are known.

Children infected with monkeypox who are younger than 8 years should stay home from school or childcare until all skin lesions are healed and any other symptoms, including fever, have been gone for at least 48 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicine. There are two reasons for keeping these young children at home. Children younger than 8 years who get monkeypox may be more likely to have severe disease. And they are more likely to have more direct physical contact with each other just through regular play and interaction during the day. Keeping children under 8 at home keeps them away from a setting where there are a lot of small children who could be exposed.

Children with monkeypox who are age 8 or older may be able to attend school before all lesions are fully healed as long as certain criteria are met, including that the lesions can be covered. These criteria are listed on the [Isolation Instructions for People with Monkeypox](#). The instructions also explain the precautions that need to be followed until the person is ready to resume normal activities. Before your child returns to school, LAC DPH will work with you on the best way to proceed. DPH is very involved if a child has monkeypox and will be available to provide guidance and assistance to families.

Where can I get the monkeypox vaccine for me or my child?

If you or your child 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 who is eligible for vaccination.