



Monkeypox FAQs

BASICS

What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a rare zoonotic disease caused by infection with the monkeypox virus. It can spread from animals to people. The natural reservoir of monkeypox remains unknown. Monkeypox cases are very rare in U.S. Monkeypox does not occur naturally in the United States, but cases have happened that were associated with international travel or importing animals from areas where the disease is more common. Public health officials have identified limited local transmission of monkeypox, meaning that some people got monkeypox in the US from another person in the US with symptoms.

Is monkeypox a new disease?

No, monkeypox is not a new disease. 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 the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Is monkeypox related to COVID-19?

No, monkeypox is a completely different disease and is not related to COVID-19. Monkeypox is much less contagious and spreads differently than COVID-19. COVID-19 spreads through the air and when people do not have symptoms. Monkeypox is generally thought to be contagious to people with whom they’ve had very close contact over a long period of time and when they have symptoms like a rash.

Is monkeypox deadly?

Infections with the strain of monkeypox virus identified in this outbreak—the West African strain—are rarely fatal. Over 99% of people who get this form of the disease are likely to survive. However, people with weakened immune systems, children under 8 years of age, people with a history of eczema, and people who are pregnant or breastfeeding may be more likely to get seriously ill or die. Although the West African strain is rarely fatal, symptoms can be extremely painful, and people might have permanent scarring resulting from the rash.

Am I likely to get monkeypox?

At this time, the risk of monkeypox in the United States is believed to be low. Monkeypox does not spread easily between people, and the time between exposure and when symptoms start gives health officials more time to track down contacts and break the chain of infection. People who do not have monkeypox symptoms cannot spread the virus to others.

Does the monkeypox virus have variants?

All viruses change and evolve over time, however, the monkeypox virus mutates slower than coronaviruses.

SYMPTOMS

What are the symptoms of monkeypox?

Symptoms of monkeypox can include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches and backache
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Chills
- Exhaustion
- A rash that can look like pimples or blisters that appear on the face, inside the mouth, and on other parts of the body, like the hands, feet, chest, genitals, or anus.
 - The rash goes through different stages before healing completely. The illness typically lasts 2-4 weeks.

Sometimes, people get a rash first, followed by other symptoms. Others only experience a rash.

What should I do if I have symptoms?

- See a healthcare provider if you notice a new or unexplained rash or other monkeypox symptoms.
- Remind the healthcare provider that monkeypox is circulating.
- Avoid close contact (including intimate physical contact) with others until a healthcare provider examines you.
- Avoid close contact with pets or other animals until a healthcare provider examines you.
- If you’re waiting for test results, follow the same precautions.
- If your test is positive, stay isolated until your rash has healed, all scabs have fallen off, and a fresh layer of intact skin has formed.
- If your test is positive, notify anyone you may have had contact with since your symptoms develop. Public health may reach out to you to assist with this process.

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SPREAD

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 for initial testing to know if it is in the same pox virus family as monkeypox. The decision to test will be made in coordination with your public health agency. Further testing will likely need to be done by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to confirm if it is monkeypox.

How does monkeypox spread, and how contagious is it?

Monkeypox spreads in different ways. The virus can spread from person to person through direct contact with the infectious rash, scabs, or body fluids. It also can be spread by respiratory secretions during prolonged, face-to-face contact, or during intimate physical contact, such as kissing, cuddling, or sex. In addition, pregnant people can spread the virus to their fetuses through the placenta.

Touching items (such as clothing or linens) that previously touched the infectious rash or body fluids is another way monkeypox spreads. It's also possible for people to get monkeypox from infected animals, either by being scratched or bitten by the animal or by eating meat or using products from an infected animal.

People who do not have monkeypox symptoms cannot spread the virus to others.

Monkeypox can spread from the time symptoms start until the rash has fully healed and a fresh layer of skin has formed. The illness typically lasts 2-4 weeks.

Can I get monkeypox from having sex?

Even though it is not considered a sexually transmitted infection, monkeypox can spread during intimate physical contact between people. This contact can happen when you have sex, including:

- Oral, anal, and vaginal sex, or touching the genitals or anus of a person with monkeypox.
- Hugging, massage, kissing or talking closely.
- Touching fabrics, shared surfaces, and objects, such as bedding, towels and sex toys, that were used by a person with monkeypox.

Anyone can get monkeypox if they have close contact with someone who has the virus.

Who is considered high risk?

- People with immunocompromising conditions
- Young Children
- Pregnant and Breastfeeding women
- Individuals with skin conditions that cause extreme shedding of skin layers
- Individuals with a history or presence of atopic dermatitis
- Individuals with other active exfoliative or shedding skin conditions

How long does monkeypox last?

Patients are considered infectious from initial symptoms until all skin lesions crust and a fresh layer of intact skin has formed. This typically last 2 to 4 weeks.

Is monkeypox fatal?

To date, there have been no deaths reported in the United States due to the Monkeypox virus. Studies of human Monkeypox infections in rural Central and West Africa – where people live in remote areas and are medically underserved – have reported case-fatality ratios of 1% to 10%. Additionally, the Monkeypox virus detected in cases in the United States so far belong to the West African strain, which is associated with a lower mortality rate than the Central African Strain.



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PETS AND ANIMALS

Could my pet get monkeypox?

Monkeypox is zoonotic, meaning it can spread between animals and people. However, CDC does not currently believe that monkeypox poses a high risk to pets. We are continuing to monitor the situation closely.

During the 2003 monkeypox outbreak in the United States, we did not see disease spread to domestic animals other than prairie dogs, and we do not have reason to believe that we will see that now. However, we still recommend that people with monkeypox avoid interacting with animals and find someone else to take care of their pets while they recover.

TREATMENT/VACCINATION

What treatments are available for monkeypox?

There are no treatments specifically for monkeypox virus infections. However, monkeypox and smallpox viruses are genetically similar, which means that antiviral drugs and vaccines developed to protect against smallpox may be used to treat and prevent monkeypox virus infections.

Antivirals, such as tecovirimat (TPOXX), may be recommended for people who are more likely to get severely ill, like patients with weakened immune systems.

The U.S. government has two stockpiled vaccines—JYNNEOS and ACAM2000—that can prevent monkeypox in people who have been exposed to the virus. Vaccines may be recommended for people who have had contact with someone who has monkeypox, or for healthcare and public health workers who may have been exposed to the virus.

Do I need to get vaccinated against monkeypox?

CDC does not recommend widespread vaccination against monkeypox at this time. However, vaccination may be recommended for some people who:

- Are close personal contacts of people with monkeypox.
- May have been exposed to the virus.
- May have an increased risk of being exposed to the virus, such as people who perform laboratory testing to diagnose monkeypox.

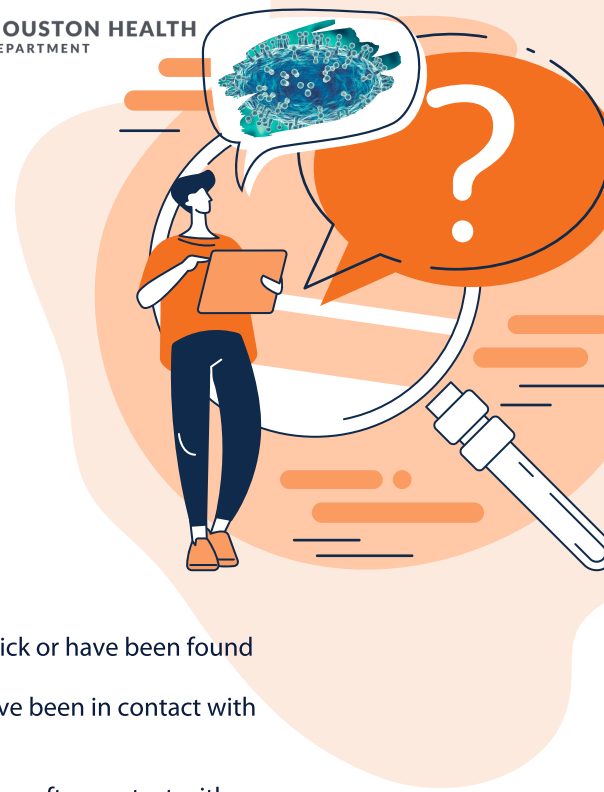
Who should get vaccinated during Phase I?

- If a sexual partner has been diagnosed with monkeypox in the last 14 days.
- If you have had multiple sexual partners in the past 14 days in a jurisdiction or area with known monkeypox cases.

Does previous smallpox vaccination affect current recommendations for monkey pox vaccinations (JYNNEOS/ACAM2000)?

- Previous smallpox vaccination does provide protection, but that protection may not necessarily be lifelong or as strong as it previously was.
- During the 2003 monkeypox outbreak, several people who were infected with monkeypox had previously been vaccinated against smallpox decades prior.

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PREVENTION

How can monkeypox be prevented?

There are things that can prevent infection with monkeypox:

- Avoid close contact with people and animals with monkeypox symptoms
- 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 have 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.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- **Houston Health Department** | www.houstonhealth.org
- **Texas Department of State Health Services** | www.dshs.texas.gov
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** | www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/index/html

This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician and/or veterinarian for specific clinical information related to you or your animal.