

## **Dickinson College Wellness Center**

### **Monkeypox Information Sheet**

#### **What is Monkeypox?**

Monkeypox is an infection that causes fever and a painful rash. It was originally discovered in monkeys, which is where the name comes from.

For many years, monkeypox was uncommon. But in 2022, there has been an outbreak of new cases. These have happened in countries where people typically do not get monkeypox, including the US.

Health experts are concerned about monkeypox because of the sudden increase in cases. But most people who get monkeypox will not get seriously ill or die.

Monkeypox can make you sick, with symptoms like a rash, which may look like pimples, blisters, or sores, often with an earlier flu-like illness. Monkeypox is caused by a virus that is in the same family as the virus that causes smallpox, but it typically results in a milder infection.

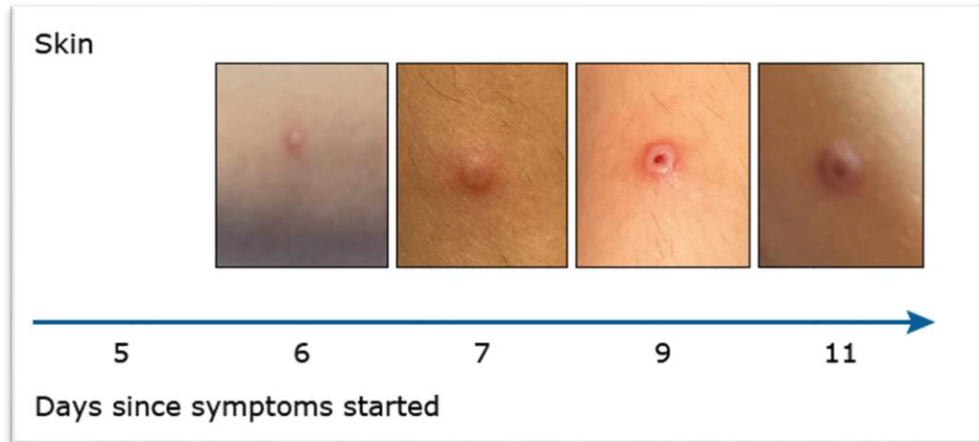
Most infections last 2-4 weeks and resolve without specific treatment, but some groups are likely at higher risk of severe illness, including people who have weakened immune systems or are pregnant, and people with history of atopic dermatitis or eczema.

#### **What are the symptoms of monkeypox?**

Symptoms usually start between 5 and 13 days after a person is infected with the virus. Some people have a few days of feeling sick, similar to the flu. Symptoms might include fever, headache, feeling very tired and achy, and swollen lymph nodes. Then, a few days after these symptoms start, a rash appears.

- The monkeypox rash can look like pimples or blisters. It starts as a few small spots, then more appear.
- During the 2022 outbreak, some people have first noticed the rash in their genital or anal area.
- The rash can also affect the face, inside of the mouth, hands, feet, and other parts of the body.
- The bumps swell with fluid, then pop. Then, they dry up and form scabs, which eventually fall off.
- The rash can be painful, although it might become itchy when scabs start to form.

For some people, the rash is the first or only symptom they have, and they do not know they are sick until it appears. The rash usually lasts for about 2 to 4 weeks.



These pictures show examples of the sores that appear in people with monkeypox. They can be spread out or clustered. They start out as small spots, then swell with fluid. Eventually, they pop and form scabs, which fall off as they heal.

From: Antinori A, Mazzotta V, Vita S, et al. Epidemiological, clinical and virological characteristics of four cases of monkeypox support transmission through sexual contact, Italy, May 2022. *Euro Surveill* 2022; 27(22). Available at: <https://www.eurosurveillance.org/content/10.2807/1560-7917.ES.2022.27.22.2200421>

## How does monkeypox spread?

In the past, the most common way for monkeypox to spread was from an infected animal to a person. This could happen from touching the animal's body fluids or through a bite or scratch.

During the 2022 outbreak, the infection has been spreading from person to person. This can happen through:

- Touching an infected person's rash, scabs, or body fluids – This seems to be the main way the infection is spreading during this outbreak. In many cases, this has happened through sexual activity. Experts are studying whether the infection can also spread through semen or vaginal fluids.
- Touching something that has touched an infected person – For example, if fluid from a person's rash gets on clothing, bedding, or sex toys, it is possible for the infection to spread to others who touch these items.
- Through tiny droplets from the lungs – The infection can spread in this way if people are face-to-face, for example kissing or cuddling, for a long time.

It is also possible for a pregnant person to pass the infection to their baby.

**A person is most likely to spread monkeypox from the time symptoms start until the rash has fully healed and a fresh layer of skin has formed. This usually takes 2-4 weeks.** Experts do not yet know if a person is contagious before the rash appears.

**Monkeypox is not as contagious as the virus that causes COVID-19. You are not likely to get it by being near someone unless you have direct contact with their skin or you are face-to-face for a long time.**

## Who is at risk for monkeypox?

Anyone can get monkeypox if they have close contact with someone who is infected. During the 2022 outbreak, many of the people who have been infected are men who have sex with men. But it's important to know that **anyone** can get the infection, no matter their gender identity, sexual orientation, or sex practices. Thinking of monkeypox as something that only affects certain people or groups is both inaccurate and harmful.

## **What should I do if I have symptoms?**

**If you have any symptoms of monkeypox, please call the Wellness Center at 717-245-1663.** Our staff will ask you questions and schedule an exam. If possible, keep any rashes covered and avoid close contact or sex with others until you have been evaluated.

## **What should I do if I think I was exposed?**

If you had close contact with someone who had monkeypox, you should also tell your health care provider, even if you don't have any symptoms. They can tell you what to do next.

If you were exposed to monkeypox, you will need to monitor yourself for symptoms for 21 days. You should then call your doctor or nurse if you notice any symptoms such as fever, swollen lymph nodes, or any rash or sores.

In some cases, experts recommend vaccination in addition to monitoring.

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

Yes. If your healthcare provider thinks you might have monkeypox, they will use a swab to take a sample of fluid from your rash. They will send it to a special lab for testing. In some cases, they might do blood tests, too.

## **How is monkeypox treated?**

Most people with monkeypox will not get seriously ill and will be able to stay home while they get better. This usually takes 2 to 4 weeks without treatment.

There is no treatment specifically for monkeypox, but because the monkeypox and smallpox viruses are closely related, drugs and vaccines developed to protect against smallpox may be used to prevent and treat monkeypox virus infections. Treatment will depend on how sick someone gets or whether they're likely to get severely ill, such as if they have a weakened immune system. Use of treatments is coordinated through the local or state health department.

## **How can I avoid spreading monkeypox to others?**

If you have monkeypox, there are things you can do to lower the risk of spreading the infection to other people.

The best way to avoid spreading the infection to others is to **self-isolate until your rash has fully healed (meaning the scabs have fallen off and new skin has formed, which typically takes up to 4 weeks)**. Isolation means staying away from other people as much as possible, even the people you live with. You will be able to end isolation when cleared by state or local public health officials.

To protect others, you can also:

- Cover rashes on the body with long sleeves or pants to avoid touching other people.
- Wash any clothing, bedding, or other items that have touched your rash. Do not shake out clothing or bedding around other people. If someone else needs to touch these items, or help care for you, they should wear gloves.
- Wash your hands often. Others in your home should also wash their hands often.
- Be extra careful if you do need to be around other people. Cover any parts of your skin that have a rash and wear a face mask.
- Limit use of spaces, items, and food that are shared with other household members.
- Use a separate bathroom if there are others that live in the same household.
- Routinely clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces and items, such as counters, light switches, and bathroom surfaces (if these must be shared) using an [EPA-registered disinfectant \(such as List Q\)](#) in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- Monkeypox can also spread to animals, so staying away from pets, livestock and other animals is important.

## How can I avoid being exposed to monkeypox?

The best way to prevent monkeypox is to **avoid close contact** with anyone who might have it.

To lower your risk of being exposed:

- If a family member, friend, or partner has monkeypox, they should self-isolate until their rash has healed completely (typically 2-4 weeks).
- Avoid close contact with anyone who has symptoms of monkeypox.
- If a partner has monkeypox, avoid sex until their rash is completely healed. **Once the rash has completely healed, use a condom for the next 12 weeks.**
- Using condoms any time you have sex might help, but condoms probably cannot completely prevent the spread of monkeypox. This is because it can spread in a few different ways, as discussed above.

## Where can I go to learn more?

As we learn more about monkeypox, expert recommendations will continue to change.

You can find more information at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website ([www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox](http://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox)).

Adapted 8.18.22 [Patient education: Monkeypox \(The Basics\) - UpToDate](#)

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