

Lower Your Risk for Monkeypox (Mpox)

Mpox spreads primarily through close, prolonged contact with lesions and rashes on the skin. It can also spread through prolonged contact with respiratory droplets (e.g., kissing) or through touching contaminated objects (e.g., clothing, bedding, etc.).

If you are at risk of getting mpox, a great thing you can do to lower your risk is get vaccinated.

If you or a partner have mpox or think you may have mpox, the best way to protect yourself and others is to avoid sex of any kind (oral, anal, vaginal) and kissing or touching each other's bodies—while you are sick. Especially avoid touching any rash.

Do not share things like towels, fetish gear, sex toys, and toothbrushes.

How to lower your risk

Since mpox is still spreading in Minnesota (and across the United States and other countries globally), it is recommended to practice prevention and risk reduction measures. Keep in mind that there are a lot of ways to reduce risk. You may choose to use one or two or all of these suggestions. The following information gives tips on how to lower the risk of getting or spreading mpox.

- Consider taking a temporary pause with sex.
 - Do not have sex or intimate contact with new or anonymous partners.
- Avoid the crowds.
 - Consider skipping spaces like dark back rooms, saunas, sex clubs, or private and public sex parties, when they are super crowded and you cannot control who you are bumping up against and rubbing skin-to-skin with.

If you do choose to have sex

Ask your partner(s) about mpox – if they've had any symptoms or recent exposures to someone with confirmed or suspected mpox.

- This is also a good time to also ask your partner about sexually transmitted diseases including HIV and syphilis; if they have had any recent partners diagnosed with an STD or HIV, been diagnosed themselves, and how recently they have been tested.

It's OK to be picky with your sex partners

- There are many factors that go into choosing who to have sex with. Pay attention to how you're making choices about who you hook up with.
 - Limiting your number of sex partners to reduce your likelihood of exposure.
 - Hooking up with people you know can be one way to reduce your risk of mpox if you're able to have open and honest conversations about mpox symptoms and possible exposures.
- If you are having sex with someone new, make a habit of exchanging contact information with them to allow for sexual health follow-up, if needed.

Use condoms

- Condoms (latex or polyurethane) can protect your anus (butthole), mouth, penis, or vagina from exposure to mpox.
 - However, condoms alone may not prevent all exposures to mpox since the rash/lesions can occur on other parts of the body. And if you have contact with a lesion elsewhere, it is likely you will become infected.
 - Condoms are also a great way to prevent STDs and HIV.

Have sex with the lights on

- If you are having sex in the dark, it might be hard to see any lesions on you or your partner.
- Even with light, some lesions and rashes can be hidden and not obvious, like if they are occurring in the genitals and anal area or on the throat.

Consider wearing gloves

- Gloves (latex, polyurethane, or nitrile) can reduce the possibility of exposure if inserting fingers or hands into the vagina or the anus. The gloves must cover all exposed skin and be removed carefully to avoid touching the outer surface.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after removing gloves.

Consider not kissing or exchanging spit (including oral sex)

- Mpox can spread through contact with respiratory droplets for a long time.
- Remember, if there is skin-to-skin or oral contact with a lesion elsewhere on the body, it is likely you will still become infected.

Consider having sex with your clothes on to reduce skin-to-skin contact

- Cover areas where rash is present, reducing as much skin-to-skin contact as possible.
 - Leather or latex gear also provides a barrier to skin-to-skin contact.

Remember to wash your hands, fetish gear, sex toys, and any fabrics (bedding, towels, clothes) after having sex.

Get creative

Consider options for engaging in sex that have an even higher chance of preventing mpox:

- Masturbate together at a distance without touching each other and without touching any rash.
- Have virtual sex with no in-person contact.

If you find out after a sexual encounter that your partner had mpox

If you don't have symptoms, you may be able to get a mpox vaccine for post-exposure prophylaxis (if you have not already received mpox vaccine series).

- Contact your health care provider if you have one. If you do not have a provider or your provider does not have vaccine, visit the [Monkeypox Vaccine Locator](#).
- Learn more at [Mpox Vaccine in Minnesota](#).

Watch for symptoms of mpox. You could develop symptoms up to three weeks after being exposed to someone with mpox.

If you have symptoms of mpox, get tested. Contact your health care provider or go to a clinic in your area.

- Isolate from others, including those you live with and **do not have sex with others**, until you receive more information from a doctor.
- There is a medicine that could help with symptoms.
 - It is also recommended to get tested for STDs, including syphilis and HIV. These infections could make a mpox infection worse.

Risk reduction after vaccination

If you can get vaccinated, take a temporary break from risky activities until you are two weeks after your second dose. Your protection will be highest two weeks after your second dose of vaccine. It is still important to remain cautious and aware of mpox as it spreads in the state. It is best to continue to practice prevention and risk reduction measures even after being vaccinated.