

Public health advice for gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men on the recent outbreak of monkeypox

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An outbreak of a viral infection called monkeypox is currently being reported in countries that have not previously had cases. Anyone who has close contact with someone who is infectious is at risk. Cases have been identified in communities of gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men who have had recent sexual contact with a new partner or partners; but the risk is not limited to these groups.

We know that this outbreak is concerning, especially for people who are unwell, their partners, families and communities. Learning more about monkeypox can help people protect themselves and help stop its onward spread to others. Know your risk to lower your risk.

How to use this document:

The advice in this document is intended for use by individuals, community leaders, influencers, health workers and others affected by or working on the monkeypox outbreak. It contains information to help people reduce their risk of monkeypox and to help slow the spread of the virus.

Information about monkeypox is evolving rapidly. Advice may change as we learn more. Check [who.int](https://www.who.int) for the most up to date information.

What you need to know about monkeypox:

Symptoms:

If you are exposed to someone with monkeypox you could develop symptoms up to 21 days later.

Most people with monkeypox will get a rash. It can look like pimples/blisters and may be painful and itchy. The rash can be found anywhere on the body, but is often found around the genital and anal region, and on the face, palms of hands and soles of feet. It can also be found inside the mouth, throat, vagina and anus. Some people will have one or two lesions, while others can have several thousand. The rash remains infectious until it has crusted over, the scabs have fallen off and a new layer of skin formed underneath. This can take several weeks, during which you should isolate to protect others. Other symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Swollen lymph nodes • Headaches
- Muscle aches
- Back pain
- Low energy

People may experience all or only a few of these symptoms. While some people have mild symptoms, others may develop more serious illness and need care in a health facility. Anyone who has symptoms that could be monkeypox or who has been in contact with someone who has monkeypox should call or visit a health care provider and seek their advice.

How monkeypox spreads:

Monkeypox is spread through close contact (face-to-face, skin-to-skin, mouth-to-mouth and mouth-to-skin) with someone who has monkeypox, including kissing or sexual contact. People are infectious until all their lesions have crusted over, the scabs have fallen off and a new layer of skin has formed underneath.

The virus can also spread from contaminated environments to humans, such as when a person with monkeypox touches clothing, bedding, towels, objects, electronics and surfaces. Someone who touches these items can then become infected. It is also possible to become infected from breathing in skin flakes or virus from clothing, bedding or towels.

Ulcers, lesions or sores in the mouth can also be infectious, meaning the virus can spread through direct contact with the mouth, respiratory droplets and possibly through short-range aerosols.

If you have confirmed or suspected monkeypox:

- Seek advice from your health care provider and get tested
- Self-isolate and avoid close contact with others (including sex)
- Take care of your symptoms and your physical and mental health while you isolate

You can help to stop this outbreak by:

- Learning more about how monkeypox is affecting your community
- Combating misinformation by sharing only reliable, evidence based and non-stigmatizing information from trustworthy sources
- Staying calm, taking care of your mental health and openly communicating with others

Having or being exposed to monkeypox is nothing to be ashamed of.

Anyone can get monkeypox. Stigmatizing, blaming or shaming people because of a disease is **never** ok. Stigma makes it harder to end outbreaks and can stop people from accessing services. Don't allow fear of judgment stop you from seeking the healthcare and social support you need if you have symptoms that could be monkeypox.