

Monkeypox Frequently Asked Questions



WHAT IS MONKEPOX?

- Monkeypox is a rare disease that is caused by infection with the monkeypox virus which is related to the smallpox virus. While generally less severe and much less contagious than smallpox, monkeypox can be a serious illness. It spreads from infected humans, animals, and materials contaminated with the virus but primarily through close, personal, often skin-to-skin contact with people who have monkeypox symptoms, such as rash and sores.

IS IT DEADLY?

- Monkeypox symptoms are similar to smallpox symptoms, but milder, and monkeypox is 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 it is rarely fatal, symptoms can be extremely painful, and people might have permanent scarring resulting from the rash.

AM I AT RISK?

- At this time, the risk of monkeypox in the United States is believed to be low. Monkeypox does not spread easily between people; however, anyone in close contact with a person with monkeypox can get it and should take steps to protect themselves.
- People who do not have monkeypox symptoms cannot spread the virus to others.

WHO IS AT INCREASED RISK?

- Young children (<8 years of age), individuals who are pregnant or immunocompromised, and individuals with history of atopic dermatitis or eczema may be at especially increased risk for severe outcomes from monkeypox disease.

HOW IS MONKEYPOX TRANSMITTED?

- Monkeypox spreads primarily through direct contact with infectious sores, scabs, or body fluids, including during sex, as well as activities like kissing, hugging, massaging, and cuddling. Monkeypox can spread through touching materials used by a person with monkeypox that haven't been cleaned, such as clothing, towels and bedding. It can also spread by respiratory secretions (talking, coughing, sneezing, breathing) during prolonged, close, face-to-face contact.
- Monkeypox can be spread through:
 - Direct skin-skin contact with rash and sores, including through hugging, massaging and cuddling
 - Sexual/intimate contact, including kissing
 - Living in a house and sharing a bed with someone
 - Sharing towels or unwashed clothing
 - Respiratory secretions through prolonged face-to-face interactions (the type that mainly happen when living with someone or caring for someone who has monkeypox)
- Monkeypox is NOT spread through:
 - Casual conversations
 - Walking by someone with monkeypox like in a grocery store

- Scientists are still learning if monkeypox can be spread through:
 - Semen or vaginal fluids
 - Contact with people who have no symptoms (we think people with symptoms are most likely to spread it, but some people may have very mild illness and not know they are infected)

WHEN IS MONKEYPOX CONTAGIOUS?

- Monkeypox symptoms usually start within 2 weeks (but can be up to 3 weeks) after exposure to the virus. Usually, **people are only thought to be contagious (infectious) when they have symptoms and until all sores, including scabs, have healed and a fresh layer of skin has formed.** This can take several weeks. Researchers are still trying to understand if the virus can spread from someone who has no symptoms.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF MONKEYPOX?

- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches and backache
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Chills
- Exhaustion
- A rash that can look like pimples or blisters that appears 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.
- Symptoms usually appear one to two weeks after infection.
- Within 1 to 3 days (sometimes longer) after the appearance of fever, the person can develop a rash or sores. The sores will go through several stages, including scabs, before healing. They can look like pimples or blisters and may be painful and itchy. The rash or sores may be located on or near the genitals (penis, testicles, labia, and vagina) or anus but could also be on other areas like the hands, feet, chest, and face.
- Most people with monkeypox will get the rash or sores. The rash begins as 2–5 mm diameter maculopapules, which evolve into:
 - Vesicles (small fluid-filled blisters)
 - Pustules
 - Then crust over



HOW IS MONKEYPOX PREVENTED?

There are number of ways to prevent the spread of monkeypox, including:

- Talking to your sexual partner/s about any recent illness and being aware of new or unexplained sores or rashes on your body or your partner's body, including on the genitals and anus

- Avoiding close contact, including hugging, kissing, cuddling and sexual activity with people with symptoms like sores or rashes
- Not sharing materials (e.g., utensils, cups, clothing, towels, bedding) with someone who has symptoms
- Washing your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Using [PPE](#) (like a mask & gloves) when caring for others with symptoms

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF EXPOSED TO MONKEYPOX?

- Contact a health care provider as soon as possible and let them know you have been exposed to monkeypox. Health care providers can provide testing.
- Health care providers and local health departments may also recommend a vaccine for those who are exposed to help prevent infection or decrease the seriousness of the illness.

WHEN SHOULD SOMEONE GET TESTED?

- People who think they have monkeypox or have had close personal contact with someone who has monkeypox should visit a healthcare provider to help them decide if they need to be tested for monkeypox.
- If they decide that you should be tested, they will work with you to collect the specimens and send them to a laboratory for testing.
- Commercial Laboratory Monkeypox Testing: Five commercial laboratories have begun testing for monkeypox.
 - These labs include: Aegis Science, Labcorp, Mayo Clinic Laboratories, Sonic Healthcare, Quest Diagnostics. Please follow the collection, storage, and shipping instructions from these laboratories as they may differ and contact the commercial lab directly for any questions. Prior authorization is not required from Sacramento County Public Health (SCPH) for commercial laboratory monkeypox testing

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE SYMPTOMS OF MONKEYPOX?

- Contact a health care provider as soon as possible and let them know you have symptoms.
- People who have monkeypox symptoms should ideally isolate away from others until their symptoms have gone away completely and until all sores, including scabs, have healed and a fresh layer of skin has formed for at least 48 hours. If needing to be around others, people with monkeypox should cover up sores and wear a mask.
- Standard laundry detergents are appropriate for cleaning clothes or linens (e.g., bedding and towels) used by someone with monkeypox.

WHAT TREATMENTS ARE AVAILABLE FOR MONKEYPOX?

- There are no treatments specifically for monkeypox virus infections. However, because of genetic similarities in the viruses, antiviral drugs used to treat smallpox may be used to treat monkeypox 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.
- Monkeypox treatment will be prioritized for patients meeting any of the following criteria:
 - HIV positive
 - Have disseminated lesions
 - Has additional symptoms other than lesions, including pain, high fever, mouth sores, or rectal fullness with difficulty having a bowel movement
 - Progressing disease with new lesions appearing

- Within first 7 days of symptom onset

IS THERE A VACCINATION TO TREAT MONKEYPOX?

- Because monkeypox and smallpox viruses are genetically similar, vaccines developed to protect against smallpox viruses may be used to prevent monkeypox infections.
- JYNNEOS is a vaccine indicated for prevention of monkeypox disease.
- It is administered as two subcutaneous injections four weeks apart. People who receive JYNNEOS are not considered vaccinated until 2 weeks after they receive the second dose of the vaccine.

WILL I HAVE SIDE EFFECTS FROM THE VACCINE?

- Most people who get the monkeypox vaccine have only minor reactions, like mild fever, tiredness, swollen glands, and redness and itching at the place where the vaccine is given.

WHO SHOULD GET VACCINATED?

Men who have sex with men and/or transgender individuals who meet at least one of the following criteria:

- have tested positive for an STI in the last two months
- had 2+ sexual partners in the last 3 weeks
- attended or work at a commercial sex venue in the last 3 weeks
- had anonymous sex in the last 3 weeks

Anyone, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation, who:

- is a sexual partner of someone who meets the above criteria **OR**
- engaged in transactional sex or sex work in the last 3 weeks **OR**
- was identified by SCPH as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for monkeypox

These criteria will be updated as vaccine supply increases.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE JYNNEOS VACCINE?

- JYNNEOS vaccine is administered in two injections in the upper arm at least four weeks apart. Most people who get the JYNNEOS vaccine have only minor reactions, like pain, redness, swelling and itching at the injection site, and less commonly, muscle pain, headache, fatigue (tiredness), nausea, chills and mild fever, and swollen glands.
- You can receive your second dose of JYNNEOS at least 28 days after receiving your first dose. Come to a monkeypox vaccine clinic to receive your second dose. Note that some clinics require appointments or may have limited vaccine supply and don't forget to bring your vaccination record.
- Learn more about the [JYNNEOS vaccine](#).

WHERE CAN I GET A VACCINE?

- Talk to your health care provider if you think you have been exposed to monkeypox or are at high risk for exposure.
- Check the [Sacramento County Public Health Website](#) for local clinic locations.
- The federal government announced that it is expanding its vaccine response to reach people at higher risk of acquiring monkeypox, however vaccine supply is still very limited.

WHEN SHOULD I GET VACCINATED FOR MONKEYPOX IF I HAVE BEEN EXPOSED?

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) recommend that people who have been exposed to monkeypox be given the vaccine to prevent them from developing the disease – this is called **post-exposure prophylaxis or PEP**. PEP can also be given to people who do not have a known exposure but are at risk for recent exposure to monkeypox cases. Vaccines are not recommended for people who have monkeypox.
- PEP with the JYNNEOS vaccine should be given within 4 days from the date of exposure to help prevent onset of the disease. If given between 4–14 days after the date of exposure, vaccination may reduce the symptoms of disease, but may not prevent the disease.
- To get PEP, contact your provider and your provider will contact public health with a request for vaccine.
- For more information on the vaccine, visit the [CDC JYNNEOS Vaccine Statement](#) and the [CDC's Consideration on Monkeypox Vaccine site](#).