

More monkeypox questions answered

7/20/2022

While monkeypox has not spread as rapidly as COVID-19, cases have continued to rise and expand geographically. To date, more than 14,500 cases have been reported worldwide, spanning 70 countries with cases concentrated in Europe. As of July 20, 17 cases were reported in Michigan, with 2,100+ cases in the U.S. across 45 states. Visit the [CDC's tracking pages](#) for the most current case counts.

A rare disease caused by a virus, monkeypox was first discovered in 1958 when two outbreaks of a pox-like disease occurred in colonies of monkeys kept for research, leading to the name "monkeypox." It was not seen in humans until 1970; most cases have been found in African nations.

Dennis Cunningham, M.D., System Medical Director, Infection Prevention, provided the following helpful information about monkeypox for team members:

What is monkeypox? Monkeypox is a viral disease that can cause skin lesions that look like smallpox. It is in the same family as smallpox but much less dangerous. The virus lives in rodents (and possibly non-human primates) in parts of Africa. People typically become infected when they travel to Africa.

Will monkeypox become a pandemic like COVID-19? It is too soon to tell if this will become a pandemic. Public health agencies are monitoring cases. The good news is that it is spread very differently than COVID-19 – only through close contact with an infected person. In addition, people who have been immunized against smallpox have a level of protection against monkeypox. Most Americans born before 1970 received the smallpox vaccine. (It was discontinued in 1972 when smallpox was eradicated in the United States.)

Will we see more cases? Yes, more cases of monkeypox will be reported over the coming days and weeks. Federal officials said they expect cases to grow now and into August as more people are exposed and testing volume increases.

How is monkeypox transmitted? People who have monkeypox are contagious for 2-4 weeks. The virus infects humans by:

- Direct contact with rash, scabs, and body fluids.
- Respiratory secretions during prolonged contact/intimate contact.
- Touching infected items.
- Bites from infected animals.
- Across the placenta in pregnant women, who can pass it to their babies.

Is there treatment for monkeypox? Yes, monkeypox management includes:

- Treatment of critically ill/immunocompromised patients
- Tecovirimat: Antiviral approved in 2018 to treat smallpox that is well tolerated.
- Vaccinia immune globulin (antibodies developed in response to the smallpox vaccine)
- Cidofovir (significant toxicity)
- Brincidofovir – Conjugated to lipid, prodrug activated inside cells, higher intracellular concentrations, decreased toxicity

What is unusual with this outbreak? Monkeypox is rare in the United States. Outbreaks are usually limited geographically. Some (but not all) of the recent cases occurred in men who reported having sex with men. While monkeypox is not a classic sexually transmitted infection like syphilis or gonorrhea, it may be spread via sex. It is typically spread through contact with lesions, body fluids, and respiratory droplets.

Does monkeypox cause severe illness? Studies suggest most people infected with monkeypox actually have no symptoms. Usually, severe illness is limited to people who are immunocompromised. Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches and backache
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Chills
- Exhaustion

A rash that can look like pimples or blisters. It can appear on the face, inside the mouth, and on other parts of the body, like the hands, feet, chest, genitals.

What does the rash look like? [Click here](#) and scroll down to see what the rash looks like. The rash may resemble varicella-zoster virus, or shingles. However, the varicella-zoster rash occurs in crops of lesions in various stages (papules, vesicles, ulcers, scabbed lesions). In monkeypox, the lesions will be at the same stage and have the same appearance.

What should I do if I think I have monkeypox? A person who thinks they have monkeypox or have had close personal contact with someone who has monkeypox should call their healthcare provider. Team members who believe they had a work exposure to monkeypox (contact with a patient, but not wearing protective equipment) should contact Employee Health for guidance. Your provider and/or Employee Health will help you decide if you need to be tested. If you have been directed to isolate or test, avoid close contact with others and follow direction from your provider and/or Employee Health. If you have an active rash or other symptoms, stay in a separate room or area away from people or pets, when possible. Because people can get infected by touching items such as clothing, sheets or towels that touched the rash or body fluids, you should not to share these items with anyone else if you have a rash.

Does the smallpox vaccine (vaccinia) prevent monkeypox? Vaccination against smallpox may prevent symptoms, but it must have been given before monkeypox symptoms appear or within 5 days after exposure. At this time, it is not available to the general public and even to most healthcare workers. Most Americans born before 1970 received the smallpox vaccine.

Should I get vaccinated against monkeypox? Two vaccines are licensed by the FDA for preventing monkeypox. They are only available through the health department, and at this time, they are not available in Michigan. Once they become available, people who are close contacts of someone who has monkeypox can be vaccinated before they have symptoms. In some areas of the country where cases are concentrated it is being offered to people at high risk. As more doses become available, vaccine availability will expand. If you think you should be vaccinated, talk to your healthcare provider. [Learn more](#) about considerations for monkeypox vaccination and the vaccines from the CDC.

Are people exposed to a person with monkeypox being monitored? Yes, CDC is working with state and local health officials to identify people who may have been in contact with people who have tested positive for monkeypox. [Learn more](#) from CDC about monitoring for monkeypox symptoms.

Where can I learn more about monkeypox? The [CDC is an excellent resource](#) for information on the monkeypox virus.