

FS No. 13-025-0622
Monkeypox

What is monkeypox ?

Monkeypox is a rare infectious disease caused by the monkeypox virus, which is in the same family of viruses that causes smallpox. It was first identified as a pox-like disease in monkeys kept for research, hence the name “monkeypox.”¹⁻³

Known primarily for its characteristic rash with lesions that scab over, the monkeypox rash can occur on the palms and soles, or be generalized affecting other areas including perianal or genital areas. The incubation period (the time from infection with monkeypox to the time symptoms appear) is on average 7 to 14 days. Monkeypox is treatable; however, the disease is occasionally fatal.¹⁻³

Note that the rash associated with monkeypox can be confused with other rashes associated with sexually transmitted infections (STIs), such as still-common herpes and syphilis. However, it is also possible to be infected with both monkeypox and an STI.⁴

Why is monkeypox a concern in the U.S.?

In the U.S., outbreak cases have been attributed to travel abroad (2021) and exposures to infected imported mammals (2003). Currently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is tracking multiple cases in several countries in Europe and Australia, as well as the U.S. The CDC issued a Health Advisory on 20 May 2022 after there was a monkeypox case in Massachusetts.^{2,3}

Monkeypox is most common in countries of Africa and observed in children as well as adults. While monkeypox is not normally found in the U.S. or many other developed countries, there have been contained outbreaks over the years where a small number of cases have occurred in countries that do not normally experience the disease.^{2,3}

Who is at risk for monkeypox?

People at higher risk for monkeypox infection include those who have recently travelled to a country where monkeypox has been identified, having contact with other people who have a similar rash or have received a diagnosis of suspected or confirmed monkeypox, and men who report having had intimate contact with other men.^{3,5}

How is monkeypox spread?

Monkeypox can spread to anyone through close, personal, and often skin-to-skin contact including:

- Direct contact with monkeypox rash, sores, or scabs
- Contact with objects, fabrics (clothing, bedding, or towels), and surfaces that have been used by someone with monkeypox

- Through respiratory droplets or oral fluids from a person with monkeypox (but less transmissible through the airborne-only route than viruses such as the COVID or influenza)
- During intimate sexual contact such as oral, anal, and vaginal sex or touching the genitals or anus of a person with monkeypox
- Hugging, massaging, or kissing and talking closely

Monkeypox can be spread from the time symptoms start until all sores have healed and a fresh layer of skin has formed; this can take several weeks.^{4,5}

What are the symptoms of monkeypox?

Monkeypox symptoms can include: ¹

- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Backache
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Chills
- Exhaustion
- A rash or sores, sometimes located on or near the genitals or anus, also could appear in other areas such as the hands, feet, chest, or face



Examples of Monkeypox Rashes
Photo Credit: NHS England High
Consequence Infectious Diseases Network¹

Do military healthcare workers know about monkeypox?

Military healthcare providers are being advised to follow the CDC's advisory for all clinicians to be on the lookout for possible monkeypox cases as infected or potentially infected persons need to be isolated to prevent further infections.²

KEY INFORMATION SOURCES:

1. "Monkeypox, Signs and Symptoms," CDC, last reviewed July 16, 2021.
<https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/symptoms.html>
2. "Monkeypox Virus Infection in the United States and Other Non-endemic Countries—2022," CDC, last reviewed May 11, 2022.
<https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/2022/han00466.asp>
3. "Monkeypox, Past U.S. Cases and Outbreaks," CDC, last reviewed June 6, 2022.
<https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/outbreak/us-outbreaks.html>
4. "Monkeypox, Transmission," CDC, last reviewed May 29, 2022.
<https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/transmission.html>
5. "Monkeypox Facts for People Who are Sexually Active," CDC, last reviewed June 8, 2022.
<https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/sexualhealth/index.html>