

12/28/2022

Mpox: Frequently Asked Questions

Informations about the virus

Q: What is mpox?

Mpox, formerly known as monkeypox, is an abbreviation for human monkeypox virus. Mpox is a DNA virus related to smallpox. It infects animals and is endemic (meaning it is consistently present but typically restricted to a particular region) to forested areas of Central and West Africa. It's unclear what animals act as a reservoir for mpox, but rodents are the prime suspects. The virus can also infect rats, squirrels, prairie dogs, and some monkeys, among other animals.

The first human case was identified in 1970. There are two strains of mpox virus: MPXV-1 is typically more severe and has a case fatality rate of up to 10%. MPXV-2 causes milder illness. The estimated case fatality rate in endemic countries is around 1%. The 2022 outbreak involving non-endemic countries is caused by MPXV-2.

Q: Is it similar to smallpox?

It's in the same group of viruses, but this isn't smallpox. Mpox is much harder to catch, and it is not as severe. There are two strains of this virus, and the main one that's circulating now causes milder disease. Most people are recovering at home without any special treatment.

Q: Are there any cases in Oregon?

Yes. For an update on the number of cases in Oregon, visit www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/monkeypox

Q: Who can be affected by mpox?

Anyone can be affected by mpox. In Oregon, our data show that cisgender men and non-binary people are predominately affected by mpox. While most identify as gay or queer and report close contact with people assigned male

at birth, some cases identify as straight and/or report close contact with people assigned female at birth.

Based on these data, OHA is prioritizing the empowerment of queer communities with information, testing, prevention, and treatment strategies to stay healthy. Small numbers of women and children have also been affected by mpox in the current outbreak.

Q: Why is it called mpox?

It got its original name “monkeypox” because the first recognized outbreak was in monkeys in a Danish laboratory in 1958. However, the name “monkeypox” as it relates to the current and more recent outbreak is misleading in that the natural hosts are most likely rodents, not non-human primates.

Consistent with statements issued by the World Health Organization, and to reduce the stigma associated with the name of the virus, OHA is using mpox to refer to this virus and the infection it causes.

Q: How is it spread?

Mpox is transmitted person to person most commonly by direct contact with rash, scabs, or body fluids from a person with mpox.

Much less commonly, mpox can also be spread by touching objects, fabrics, and surfaces that have been used by a person with mpox and through contact with respiratory secretions, such as saliva, of a person with mpox.

Q: Can mpox spread through the air?

Most transmission in the current outbreak appears to be from prolonged, skin-to-skin contact. More information is needed to determine how often mpox is spread through respiratory secretions. An ill person who coughs or sneezes on someone else could possibly spread the infection, though this is not being identified as the way the infection is currently being transmitted. Most transmission in the current outbreak appears to be from direct skin-to-skin contact with the rash or bodily fluids of a person with mpox.

Q: What are the symptoms?

Illness typically starts with fever, chills, feeling ill, and swollen glands. At the same time or within five days, rash appears. For some people, the first symptom may even just be rash. The rash may start on the genitals, in

and/or around the anus, or in the mouth. It can also affect the skin of the face, arms, legs, and torso.

Initially, the rash can look like a pimple with an area of red skin underneath it. From there, the pimples can get a little bigger, form indentations, and fill with fluid or pus. Typically, they then scab. It usually takes two to four weeks to heal over with fresh skin.

Q: How long after exposure do symptoms start?

Usually within seven to 14 days, with a range of five to 21 days.

Q: When can a person with mpox spread it to others?

People with mpox may transmit the infection from when symptoms start until the rash has resolved. Passing the infection to others typically requires direct skin-to-skin contact. People at increased risk include sexual partners of a person ill with mpox, or family members and health care workers caring for someone ill with mpox.

Q: Can the virus spread before someone knows they're sick?

There have been no reports of mpox spreading before symptoms start. However, some people with mpox may not feel very sick. They might confuse their symptoms with another infection (like COVID-19) or may not notice their rash.

Q: Is mpox a sexually transmitted disease?

Mpox is not a sexually transmitted disease. The virus spreads through direct skin-to-skin contact with the sores, scabs, or body fluids of the rash of a person with mpox. Such contact can happen during kissing, hugging, cuddling, and massage as well as during sex.

Q: What is considered to be an exposure of mpox?

A person is considered to have potentially been exposed if, during the time that a person with mpox was ill and still had a rash, any of the following occurred:

- Had contact with the rash or bodily fluids of a person with mpox
- Had oral, anal, or vaginal sex with a person with mpox

- Had contact with the soiled clothing, bedding, dressings, or other garments or personal items, including fetish gear and sex toys, used by a person with mpox
- Activities resulting in contact between sleeves and other parts of an individual's clothing and the patient's skin lesions or bodily fluids, or their soiled linens or dressings (e.g., turning, bathing, or assisting with transfer) while wearing gloves but not wearing a gown
- Was otherwise within 6 feet for at least 3 hours of an unmasked person with mpox without wearing a surgical mask

For more information on mpox exposures and learning what symptoms to monitor if you think you've been exposed, refer to the [CDC guidance on monitoring and risk assessment](#).

Q: What if I think I have mpox?

Call your health care provider to let them know before you go in to be seen. If you don't have a health care provider, call 2-1-1 and someone can help you find a clinic or healthcare provider. You can also reach out to your [local public health authority](#), which can see you in one of its clinics.

If you plan to go to the emergency room or an urgent care, let the check-in staff know that you are concerned about mpox. They will ask you to wear a mask and help you cover rashes that may not be covered by your clothing while you wait to be seen.

Vaccination and other prevention strategies

Q: Is there mpox vaccine in Oregon?

Yes, Oregon has mpox vaccine. It is called Jynneos.

Q: How is Oregon using mpox vaccine?

Given as early as possible after exposure and before the appearance of rash, vaccine can be used to prevent mpox infection, reduce how long symptoms last, or make them less severe.

Oregon is using two approaches to mpox vaccination, including:

1. Vaccinating people who have had close contact with someone with mpox in Oregon or another location in the prior 14 days

2. Vaccinating people who are more likely to have had close contact with someone with mpox in the prior 14 days.

In addition, Oregon will use a strategy that prioritizes first doses to provide vaccine to as many people as possible while vaccine supply is limited.

Q: How is the vaccine given?

The mpox Jynneos vaccine was recently approved to be given intradermally to adults. However, intradermal vaccine administration is only approved for adults 18 years or older. For children or adults with a history of keloid formation (an overgrowth of scar tissue), they can receive the same mpox vaccine given as a subcutaneous injection.

Q: What can I expect in terms of side effects?

Lots of people experience pain, redness, swelling, itching, and/or a hard lump at the injection site. Sometimes these side effects don't start right away, but about 3-5 days after the shot. These reactions may also last for several days. Less commonly people may experience muscle aches, headache, fatigue, nausea, and chills a few days after the shot (but not as bad as with the COVID-19 vaccines!). If you are worried about the side effects that you are feeling, call your healthcare provider or your local health department.

Q: When will the vaccine start protecting me from mpox?

The first dose starts your protection against mpox. Most people make antibodies against mpox by 2-4 weeks after the first shot, but maximum protection starts 2 weeks after the second dose. We recommend that everyone get a second dose.

Q: When will I get my second dose?

Your second dose will be scheduled about 28 days after your first one. Your vaccine team will work with you to schedule a second dose when it's right for you.

Q: Should I be vaccinated if I've already had mpox?

People with mpox infection may have short term protection from another mpox infection. We don't know how long that protection lasts. Right now, we are not offering vaccine to people who have had mpox but may do so in the future.

Q: What if I've been vaccinated against smallpox?

We are offering vaccine regardless of prior smallpox vaccination since the protection from the smallpox vaccine may decrease over time.

Q: Will I need to pay for vaccine?

The vaccine itself is free and its administration is covered by insurance. In addition, you will not be asked to provide any information or documentation of immigration status.

If you are not eligible for vaccine right now or are waiting for your second dose, here are some things you can do to protect yourself and your community from mpox:

Knowledge is power

Keep up-to-date with the facts about mpox from reliable sources. Information can change fast. Talk to trusted people in your life, your friends, and your sex partners.

Fight stigma

Anyone can be affected by mpox. There's no shame in finding out you have mpox. Many of us are learning we have it because we are taking proactive steps to look after our health and keep our community safe.

Stigma stops us from accessing health care, contacting our sexual partners, and hurts our mental health. Let's take care of ourselves and each other.

Know how mpox is transmitted

Mpox is not a sexually transmitted infection or disease. Mpox is transmitted during close, personal, and skin-to-skin contact with the rash of a person with mpox. Such contact can occur during activities like, kissing, cuddling, hugging, massage, dancing skin-to-skin, and sex.

Know the symptoms

Check in with your body. Symptoms include new rashes, sores, blisters, and spots. Some people also get fevers, headaches, swollen and painful glands, muscle aches, or exhaustion.

If you don't feel right, have a rash or other concerning symptom, avoid close, personal and skin-to-skin contact with others, and talk to a health care provider as soon as you can. Remind them that mpox is here in Oregon. While most people recover safely at home, treatment is available for more people with or at risk for more severe illness. Your health care provider can help you decide whether treatment is right for you.

Your local health [department](#) can also be a helpful source of information, testing, treatment, and vaccination for you and/or your partners.

Plan ahead

When thinking about attending a festival, concert, party, or other event, consider the amount of close, personal, and skin-to-skin contact that may occur. For example, sporting events or concerts where people are more likely to be fully clothed and unlikely to have skin-to-skin contact are safer compared to clubs and parties where people are wearing minimal clothing and there is often skin-to-skin contact or spaces like saunas, bathhouses, or sex clubs where there is minimal to no clothing and often sexual contact.

When thinking about sex, check in with your partners. Tell them how you are feeling, whether you've had any recent illness or rashes, especially on the genitals or around the anus, and invite them to do the same. Use a hand mirror or your phone to look at the skin around your anus and genitals. If you or your partner have been sick recently, are currently sick, or have any new rashes, avoid close, personal, and skin-to-skin contact and talk to a health care provider.

Open communication with partners and avoiding sex while you are sick are good practices in general.

If you choose to have sex, choose activities that don't involve direct, skin-to-skin contact or kissing, cover rashes, wash hands, towels, bedding, sex toys, and other gear promptly, and consider limiting your number of partners. Consider forming a pod. Pick one person or a small group of people and make an agreement to not have sex if you don't feel well or notice any new rashes.

Even if you are into anonymous encounters, plan to keep a phone number (or other form of contact information) for your partners just in

case you need to get in touch later. That way you can get in touch to let them know how they can be tested for mpox or get vaccinated if eligible.

If you are concerned that you may have been exposed to mpox, reach out to your local public health agency to talk through the exposure to determine the next best step.

Call ahead

If you think you may be experiencing symptoms related to mpox, tell your health care provider before you go in for care. If you plan to use an urgent care or emergency room, tell the check-in staff that you think you may have mpox. They will ask you to wear a mask and help you cover any rashes on exposed skin while you wait for care.

Stay informed

More information about mpox can be found at the following websites.

- [CDC](#)
- [OHA](#)
- [Multnomah County Health Department](#)
- [Cascade AIDS Project and PRISM](#)
- [Lane County Public Health](#)
- [Washington County Health Department](#)
- [Clackamas County Health Department](#)

Response to the current outbreak

Q: How is OHA responding to the outbreak?

OHA is working with local public health authorities, tribes, and community partners to allocate mpox vaccine supply and share information about mpox, the outbreak, and infection prevention strategies with people who might be at increased risk of infection.

OHA also is sharing information with clinicians about the outbreak, how to recognize and test for mpox illness, and how to prevent spread.

Additional activities:

- OHA provided information to the public about symptoms and risk factors of mpox infection, and to seek care if these develop.
- The Oregon State Public Health Lab is conducting initial testing and arranging confirmatory testing for mpox through CDC.
- OHA is supplying vaccine to counties and health systems so they can help those at increased risk of infection to protect themselves.

Document accessibility: For individuals with disabilities or individuals who speak a language other than English, OHA can provide information in alternate formats such as translations, large print, or braille. Contact the COVID-19 Communications Unit at 1-971-673-2411, 711 TTY or COVID19.LanguageAccess@dhsosha.state.or.us.