



## **Mpox Virus Fact Sheet**

### **What is mpox?**

Mpox is a viral disease caused by infection with the mpox virus. Mpox symptoms are similar to smallpox symptoms, but milder, and mpox is rarely fatal. Mpox was discovered in 1958 when two outbreaks of a pox-like disease occurred in colonies of monkeys kept for research. The source of the disease remains unknown, however, African rodents and non-human primates (like monkeys) might harbor the virus and infect people.

The first human case of mpox was recorded in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1970. Prior to the 2022 outbreak, mpox had been reported in people in several central and western African countries. Previously, almost all mpox cases in people outside of Africa were linked to international travel to countries where the disease commonly occurs or through imported animals. These cases occurred on multiple continents.

### **What is the cause of mpox?**

Mpox is caused by the mpox virus, which belongs to the Orthopoxvirus group of viruses. Other Orthopoxviruses that cause infections in humans include variola (smallpox), vaccinia (used for smallpox vaccine), and cowpox viruses. There are two distinct strains of the mpox virus: the Central African strain and the West African strain. The West African strain is typically associated with less severe illness.

### **What are the clinical features of mpox?**

In humans, mpox is similar to smallpox, although infection is usually mild, and many patients are asymptomatic. The incubation period (i.e., the time from exposure to when symptoms appear) for mpox is about 12 days with a range from 7 to 17 days. The illness often begins with fever, headache, muscle aches, backache, swollen lymph nodes, a general feeling of discomfort, and exhaustion. Typically, within 1 to 3 days after the fever occurs, the patient develops a papular rash (i.e., raised fluid-filled bumps), often first on the face but sometimes initially on other parts of the body, especially the genital and perianal areas. The lesions usually develop through several stages before crusting and falling off over the course of 2-4 weeks. Sometimes, people get a rash first, followed by other symptoms. Others only experience a rash.

### **How long does mpox last?**

Mpox can spread from the time symptoms start until the rash has fully healed and a fresh layer of skin has formed. The illness typically lasts 2-4 weeks.

### **Is mpox fatal?**

Deaths in the United States due to the mpox virus have been rare. Up-to-date statistics are available at [2022 Outbreak Cases and Data | Mpox | Poxvirus | CDC](#).

Studies of human mpox infections in rural Central and West Africa – where people live in remote areas and are medically underserved – have reported case-fatality ratios of 1% to 10%. Additionally, the mpox virus detected in cases so far belong to the West African strain, which is associated with a lower mortality rate than the Central African strain.

### **How do people get mpox?**

Mpox spreads in different ways. The virus can spread from person-to-person through direct contact with the infectious rash, scabs, or body fluids. It also can be spread by respiratory secretions during prolonged, face-to-face contact (within a 6-foot radius for >3 hours), or during intimate physical contact, such as kissing, cuddling, or sex. In addition, pregnant people can spread the virus to their fetus through the placenta.

Touching items (such as clothing or linens) that previously touched the infectious rash or body fluids is another way mpox spreads. It's also possible for people to get mpox from infected animals. Anyone in close personal contact with a person or animal with mpox can become infected and should take steps to protect themselves.

The most common route for transmission of mpox from infected animals to people is direct contact with the infectious rash, scabs, crusts or fluids from sores, saliva, or infected bodily fluids, including respiratory secretions. Urine and feces that contain infectious viral particles may also be a source of infection. It is possible that people with mpox can spread it to animals through close contact, including petting, cuddling, hugging, kissing, licking, sharing sleeping areas, and sharing food.

### **Who is at greatest risk of getting mpox?**

Mpox does not spread easily between people; however, anyone in close contact with a person with mpox can get it and should take steps to protect themselves. People who do not have mpox symptoms cannot spread the virus to others.

People with mpox in the current outbreak generally report having close, sustained physical contact with other people who have mpox. While many of those affected in the current global outbreaks are gay, bisexual, or other men who have sex with men, anyone who has been in close contact with someone who has mpox can get the illness.

### **How do I get tested for mpox?**

Several commercial laboratories and the state public health laboratory are offering testing for mpox. A person must be evaluated by a healthcare provider to determine if their symptoms appear to be mpox and require testing. The healthcare provider can collect specimens for testing and arrange for testing directly with a commercial laboratory or can contact the state or local health department to arrange for testing at the state public health laboratory.

### **Is there a treatment for mpox?**

Most patients have mild illness and require no treatment. Primarily the treatment, when needed, is supportive but there is an antiviral, called Tecovirimat, that treats mpox.

### **Is there a vaccine for mpox?**

There are 2 vaccines against mpox: ACAM2000 and JYNNEOS. These vaccines are used to prevent Mpox infection and can be used for post-exposure vaccination. Post-exposure vaccination prevents infection in a known exposed person such as those persons who have had close or intimate contact with infected individuals or animals. These persons can be vaccinated up to 14 days after exposure.

### **How is vaccine currently being used?**

Vaccine doses are being used to target individuals who may be at risk of acquiring mpox or those who might have severe outcomes if they become infected.

Currently, this outbreak is largely affecting gay, bisexual, or other men who have sex with men.

People who may be eligible for vaccination include:

- People who have been identified by public health officials as a contact of someone with mpox
- People who may have been exposed to mpox, such as:
  - o People who are aware that one of their sexual partners in the past 2 weeks has been diagnosed with mpox
  - o People who had multiple sexual partners in the past 2 weeks in an area with known mpox cases

Additional groups, including pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) will be added as additional vaccine resources are made available.

### **If I am eligible for the mpox vaccine, how do I get it?**

Individuals who think they meet the vaccine eligibility criteria can contact 1-877- PA-HEALTH or their local health department to determine if they are eligible and where they can go to receive the vaccine. The main vaccine being used against mpox during the 2022-2023 mpox outbreak is JYNNEOS.

JYNNEOS is a 2-dose vaccine. It was developed to protect against both mpox and smallpox. The vaccine may be given to children and adults who are at high risk for mpox. The second dose of JYNNEOS should be given 4 weeks after the first dose. The highest level of protection is expected to be reached 14 days after the second dose of the JYNNEOS vaccine.

### **What action should I take if I have been exposed to mpox?**

If you have been in contact with a case of mpox, you should monitor your health and check your temperature twice daily. If symptoms develop, you should immediately self-isolate and contact your healthcare provider or the health department for further guidance.

If you are a contact and remain asymptomatic, you can continue to do your routine daily activities (e.g., go to work or school). Contacts should not donate blood, cells, tissue, breast milk, semen, or organs while they are under symptom surveillance.

**For more information about mpox:** [Mpox | Poxvirus | CDC](#)

This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician and/or veterinarian for specific clinical information related to you or your animal.

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