

What to Expect if You Have Mpox

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This document provides information about mpox and current best practices for testing, isolating, treating, and disinfecting.

Background and Transmission

Mpox is a disease caused by the mpox virus. It can spread from person-to-person through close physical contact with infectious material from skin lesions or bodily fluids of an infected person. It may also be transmitted through respiratory droplets in prolonged face-to-face contact, and through contact with contaminated objects such as a clothing, bedding, and towels.

Mpox is mainly spread by people with symptoms but can also spread from people with very mild illness who don't know they're infected, or people without visible symptoms yet. People with mpox are infectious until all skin scabs have fallen off and a fresh layer of healthy skin has formed. Many people with mpox during the current 2022-2023 outbreak have had a mild and self-limiting illness. For more information, visit [cdc.gov/poxvirus/mpox/response/2022/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/mpox/response/2022/index.html).

Getting Tested for Mpox

To confirm mpox infection, a healthcare provider will swab skin rash lesions to test for the presence of the virus. While you are waiting for the test results, you should stay home and avoid contact with others, and monitor your symptoms.

1. If your test result is positive, [take the necessary steps](#) to protect yourself and others until you have completely recovered from your infection. This includes staying at home (isolating) until your mpox rash has healed and a new layer of skin has formed.
2. If your test result is negative: a negative test result means the test did not detect the virus and you probably do not have mpox. Continue to take steps to [protect yourself and others](#). If symptoms persist, consult a health care provider for further care.

If your symptoms worsen while isolating, reach out to a health care provider. Severe illness due to mpox may include a fever ($\geq 100.4^{\circ}\text{F}$) with a rash comprised of ≥ 100 lesions, confusion, lesions in the eyes, stiff neck, difficulty breathing, seizure, diarrhea, and/or vomiting. If you need immediate medical attention, call 911. Be sure to share that you are being tested for mpox, or if you had a positive test, that you were diagnosed with mpox.

While You Are Isolating

- Stay at home to avoid unnecessary contact with others.
- Avoid all close contact with others (including sexual contact).
- Avoid nonessential visitors in the home.
- If you have pets, avoid snuggling or kissing them, and do not let them have direct contact with your lesions or your contaminated items. Avoid all contact with pet rodents (e.g., mice, rats, guinea pigs, hamsters) or rabbits.
- Do not use contact lenses to prevent mpox infection in your eyes.
- If you leave the home (e.g., for follow-up medical care or for physical activity) avoid public spaces and maintain a safe distance from others. Always cover up all skin lesions and wear a well-fitting face mask.

- If you live in a shared space, take [appropriate measures](#) to prevent others from having direct contact with your lesions or bodily fluids, or items contaminated by lesions or bodily fluids.

Notifying Close Contacts

If you have been diagnosed with mpox, it's important to notify your close contacts that they may have been exposed to mpox as soon as possible, so they can watch for signs and symptoms, get tested, and isolate if they have symptoms. They should consider [getting vaccinated](#) if exposed less than 14 days ago, ideally within 4 days of exposure. Vaccination provides the best chance to prevent the disease or make it less severe. By letting your close contacts know they may have been exposed to mpox, you are helping to protect them and everyone around them.

Who Are Close Contacts?

A close contact is anyone who was exposed to someone with mpox symptoms through:

- Having sex; this includes oral, anal, or vaginal sex.
- Touching or coming in close contact with the rash of a person with mpox.
- Being hugged, cuddled, kissed, or having other prolonged skin-to-skin contact.
- Sharing cups, utensils, towels, clothing, bedding, blankets, or other personal objects and materials used by someone with mpox.

Treatment

- Mpox is usually a self-limited disease with symptoms that typically last 2-4 weeks. Most people get better on their own without treatment.
- Antiviral medication may be recommended for people who may be at risk of severe disease, like those with weakened immune systems. If you are at risk for severe disease, your primary care provider and Alaska Division of Public Health staff will determine if antiviral medications are appropriate for you.
- To help with symptoms, you can take over-the-counter fever and pain medication such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin).
- Stay well hydrated, and get plenty of rest.
- Seek immediate medical care if you develop any of the following:
 - trouble breathing
 - chest pain
 - a stiff neck
 - confusion
 - difficulty speaking or moving

Cleaning and Garbage Disposal

- Wear disposable gloves for direct contact with lesions and dispose after use.
- Wash hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer after touching lesion material or any object that may have had contact with lesions or lesion material.
- Wash laundry in a standard washing machine with warm water and detergent (bleach is not necessary). Avoid shaking dirty laundry in any way that might spread infectious particles.
- When in-home laundry facilities are not available and a laundromat is used, use a separate washing machine for your clothes and bedding. Avoid shaking soiled items and prevent them from being in contact with surrounding surfaces.
- Use standard household cleaning/disinfectants to clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces.
- Place contaminated waste (such as dressings and bandages) in a tight waterproof plastic bag (double-bag if possible) and discard with regular trash.