

20 QUESTIONS ABOUT MPOX

1. What is mpox?

Mpox is a disease caused by infection with the mpox virus.

Mpox virus belongs to the Orthopoxvirus genus in the family Poxviridae. This family of viruses includes variola virus (smallpox virus, which has been eradicated), vaccinia virus (used in the smallpox vaccine), cowpox virus, and *Alaskapox* virus.

While generally less severe and much less contagious than smallpox, mpox can be a serious illness.

2. Is mpox a new disease?

No. Mpox was first discovered in 1958 in captive monkeys. The natural animal reservoir of mpox remains unknown. However, African rodents and non-human primates (like monkeys) may harbor the virus and infect people. A zoonotic disease, mpox can be transmitted from animals to humans.

The first human case of mpox was recorded in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Prior to the 2022 outbreak that has spread internationally including to the U.S., 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.

3. How does mpox spread?

Mpox does not spread easily between people. Most infections occur from close, personal skin-to-skin contact with someone who has a mpox rash.

Transmission is possible through:

- Direct contact with a mpox rash, scabs or body fluids from a person with mpox.
- Touching objects or fabrics (bedding clothing or towels) or sharing items such as toothbrushes, cups or utensils that have been used by someone with mpox.
- Contact with respiratory secretions during prolonged face-to-face contact.

Mpox is NOT spread through casual conversations or by walking past someone with mpox like in a grocery store.

4. Should I be worried about mpox?

For the general public, the risk of getting mpox remains very low. However, mpox is now spreading in places where the virus was not commonly seen, like the United States and Europe. Anyone can get mpox, so it's important to be aware of the signs and symptoms and how to prevent mpox.

5. What are the symptoms?

A **rash** is the most common symptom – often located near the genitals or anus but also on the hands, feet, chest, face or mouth. Other symptoms **can include fever, chills, swollen lymph nodes, exhaustion, muscle and backache, headache, sore throat, nasal congestion or cough**. People may experience all or only a few of these symptoms, and they can appear before or after the rash.

6. When is mpox contagious?

A person with mpox can spread it to others 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. Scientists are still trying to determine if the virus can spread from someone who has no symptoms.

7. When should individuals get tested for mpox?

People who think they have symptoms of mpox should visit a health care provider to help them decide if they need to be tested for mpox.

8. Is mpox deadly?

There are two types of mpox virus: Clade I and Clade II. Infections identified in the current outbreak are with the Clade II variant, which is rarely fatal.

Over 99% of people who get this form of the disease are likely to survive. However, people with weakened immune systems, children under 8 years of age, people with a history of eczema, and people who are pregnant or breastfeeding may be more likely to get seriously ill or die.

Although the Clade II variant is rarely fatal, the rash can be extremely painful, and people can be left with some permanent scarring.

9. Am I at risk of getting mpox?

Anyone can get mpox, but those who are at higher risk for being exposed to mpox include people who:

- People who have been identified by public health officials as a contact of someone with mpox
- People who are aware that one of their sexual partners in the past 2 weeks has been diagnosed with mpox
- People who had multiple sexual partners in the past 2 weeks in an area with known mpox
- People whose jobs may expose them to orthopoxviruses, such as:
 - Laboratory workers who perform testing for orthopoxviruses
 - Laboratory workers who handle cultures or animals with orthopoxviruses
 - Some designated health care or public health workers

The current cases nationally and internationally mainly involve men who have sex with men but also include women and children.

10. How can mpox be prevented?

To prevent mpox:

- Avoid skin-to-skin contact with people who have a rash that looks like mpox (i.e. kissing, hugging, snuggling, touching the rash or scabs or having sex).
- Avoid respiratory secretions from prolonged, face-to-face contact with an infected person.
- Avoid contact with objects and materials that a person with mpox has used, such as bedding, clothing and towels.
- Do not share personal items such as toothbrushes, cups and utensils with a person with mpox.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

For more information, please visit the CDC's prevention webpage: <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/mpox/prevention.html>

11. Is there a vaccine to prevent mpox?

Yes, because mpox and smallpox viruses are genetically similar, vaccines developed to protect against smallpox viruses can be used to prevent mpox infections.

The preferred vaccine to protect against mpox is JYNNEOS, which is a two-dose vaccine. It takes 14 days after getting the second dose of JYNNEOS for its immune protection to reach its maximum.

12. Where can I receive the vaccine?

People who live or work in Alaska, are aged 18 years or older and meet eligibility criteria for the vaccine should contact their local [public health center](#) if they wish to be vaccinated.

People currently eligible to receive the vaccine include people who have been exposed to mpox and those at higher risk for exposure.

For more details about current vaccine availability and eligibility in Alaska, please visit the Alaska Department of Health [mpox webpage](#).

13. What should I do if I think I have mpox?

The Alaska Department of Health encourages people who have a new or unexplained rash and think they may have had close contact with someone who could have mpox in the last 21 days to speak with their health care provider. Testing is widely available; ask your provider if you need to be tested.

14. What treatments are available for mpox?

If you test positive for mpox, ask your health care provider about whether treatment is right for you. Antiviral drugs developed to treat related viral illnesses, such as tecovirimat (TPOXX), may be recommended for people who are more likely to get severely ill, like patients with weakened immune systems.

Most people with mpox recover fully within 2 to 4 weeks without the need for medical treatment.

15. Should I be concerned about attending a crowded event?

People can get mpox if they have close, skin-to-skin contact with someone who has mpox. Early indications are that events with activities in which people engage in close, sustained skin-to-skin contact have resulted in cases of mpox. If you plan to attend an event, consider how much close, personal, skin-to-skin contact is likely to occur there.

16. Is mpox a sexually transmitted infection (STI)?

Mpox spreads through close or intimate physical contact, including sexual contact, especially when touching rashes of someone who has mpox. Transmission may also occur when objects (like bedding) are contaminated with the virus. Scientists are still investigating whether the virus could be spread by exposure to semen or vaginal fluids, but this has not been previously known to be how the virus spreads.

In the current outbreak, mpox is spreading through sexual contact, but it's important to remember that mpox is spread in many nonsexual ways. While helpful for STI prevention, condoms are generally not sufficient to prevent mpox transmission.

17. How can a person lower their risk during sex?

Vaccination is an important tool in preventing the spread of mpox for people who have been exposed to mpox and people who may be more likely to get mpox. People at higher risk may also want to temporarily reduce or avoid behaviors that may increase your risk of mpox exposure.

- Talk with any sexual partners about mpox symptoms and be aware of any new or unexplained rashes or lesions, including in the genital area or inside the mouth.
- If you or a partner has or recently had mpox symptoms, or either of you have a new or unexplained rash anywhere, avoid sex or being intimate until you've seen a health care provider.
- Do not share things like towels, clothing and toothbrushes.
- Limit your number of sexual partners to reduce your likelihood of exposure.
- Exchange contact information with any new partner to allow for sexual health follow-up, if needed.

18. What does mpox look like?

Please visit [the CDC webpage](#) for photos of mpox rashes.



19. Is mpox related to COVID-19?

No, mpox is a completely different disease, is not related to COVID-19 and spreads differently. Mpox is spread primarily through prolonged, skin-to-skin contact. This is much different from COVID-19, which spreads easily through the air.

20. Does the mpox virus have variants?

All viruses change and evolve over time. However, the mpox virus is a DNA virus which mutates slower than coronaviruses, which are RNA viruses. The mpox viruses currently spreading outside of Africa are descended from the group of mpox viruses primarily found in West Africa. These mpox viruses tend to cause less severe disease than the mpox viruses that are found in the Congo Basin.

DOH

[health.alaska.gov/
dph/Epi/id/Pages/
Mpox.aspx](https://health.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/Mpox.aspx)



CDC

cdc.gov/monkeypox

