

MONKEYPOX: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

There is currently an outbreak of monkeypox in some countries that do not normally have cases:

- Most people recover fully without treatment, but in some cases, people can get seriously ill
- It is called 'monkeypox' because it was first found in monkeys
- While the risk to the general public is low, WHO is responding to this outbreak as a high priority
- What we know about the outbreak is changing fast – we are learning more every day

You can catch monkeypox through close contact with someone who has symptoms including:

- Skin-to-skin contact
- Face-to-face contact
- Mouth-to-skin contact
- Touching infected bedding, towels, clothing or objects



If you think you have monkeypox:

- Get advice from a health worker
- Isolate at home if possible
- Protect others by avoiding close contact with them
- Wear a mask and avoid touching if you need to have close contact

Symptoms of monkeypox include:

- Rash with blisters on face, hands, feet, body, eyes, mouth or genitals
- Fever
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Headaches
- Muscle and back aches
- Low energy



Protect yourself from monkeypox by avoiding close contact with someone who has symptoms:

- Avoid skin-to-skin, face-to-face and mouth-to-skin contact, including sexual contact
- Clean hands, objects, surfaces, bedding, towels and clothes regularly
- Wear a mask if you can't avoid close contact and when handling bedding, towels and clothes
- Ask people if they have symptoms before you have close contact
- Using condoms may not prevent monkeypox spreading during sexual contact, but can prevent other sexually transmitted infections

Stigmatising
people because
of a disease
is NEVER ok.

Anyone can get
or pass on
monkeypox

Public health advice for gatherings during the current monkeypox outbreak

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide public health advice to:

- host governments, public health authorities, national or international organizers and professional staff involved in the planning and delivery of gathering events;
- people organizing smaller gatherings or attending gatherings of any size and type.

Information on this outbreak is changing rapidly as we learn more. Check [Monkeypox outbreak 2022 - Global \(who.int\)](#) for the most up to date information.

Background

- The unexpected appearance of monkeypox in several WHO regions in the initial absence of epidemiological links to areas that have historically reported monkeypox suggests that there may have been undetected transmission for some time. Epidemiological investigations are ongoing.
- Most reported monkeypox cases have presented through sexual health or other health services in primary or secondary healthcare facilities.
- The identification of confirmed and suspected cases of monkeypox with no direct travel links to previously affected areas is atypical, and even a single case of monkeypox in a newly affected country is considered an outbreak.
- For the latest information on transmission, signs and symptoms please refer to [Clinical management and infection prevention and control for monkeypox: Interim rapid response guidance](#).

Scope

- Gatherings are events characterized by the concentration of people at a specific location for a specific purpose over a set period of time, and may be public or private, planned or spontaneous, recurrent or one-off, and also of varying size, duration and visibility. They can be of different nature, including, although not limited to, sports, religious, cultural, entertainment, political, business and health-campaign events.
- During gatherings, the likely high density and mobility of attendees (crowding) represents a conducive environment for close, prolonged and frequent interactions between people. Some gatherings may lead to attendees socially interacting with people previously unknown to them. For some, these new interactions could lead to sexual activity which can play a role in the spread of the monkeypox virus.

Risk-based approach for gatherings

Principles

- WHO recommends that the decision-making process related to holding, modifying, postponing or cancelling gatherings of any size and type should rely on a risk-based approach, tailored to the characteristics of the event under consideration and be repeated at regular intervals.
- The risk-based approach entails three steps:
 1. **Risk evaluation:** identification and quantification of the baseline risks based on the characteristics of the event and the context in which it takes place;
 2. **Risk mitigation:** application of a package of precautionary measures aimed at decreasing the baseline risk;
 3. **Risk communication:** proactive dissemination of information on the measures adopted, their rationale and purpose, and on how the relevant decisions were taken.
- In the context of the current outbreak, monkeypox-associated risks should be considered and factored in when planning a gathering event.
- Postponing or cancelling gatherings in areas where monkeypox cases have been detected is not required as a default measure.

Monkeypox-associated risks during the current outbreak

- In the context of the current monkeypox outbreak, cases have been primarily identified among some gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men including those who have reported recent sex with a new partner or multiple partners.
- Key transmission routes include skin-to-skin, mouth-to-mouth and mouth-to-skin contact during sexual activity. Transmission can also occur through skin-to-skin contact not related to sexual practices, face-to-face contact via respiratory droplets and from contaminated surfaces or material; it is still unclear if infected people with no symptoms can transmit the monkeypox virus, making it important for anyone attending gatherings to exert additional care.

Public health advice for decision-makers (authorities and event organizers)

The following precautionary measures can be considered to decrease risk of monkeypox transmission associated with gathering events:

- Health authorities are invited to:
 - identify those events in their jurisdiction that are most likely to be associated with risk of monkeypox virus transmission, based on the prevailing modes of transmission and the likely profile of the attendees;
 - ensure that monkeypox is included among the diseases regularly reported through routine surveillance; WHO has published [guidance](#) on surveillance, case investigation and contact tracing for monkeypox;
 - make provision to ensure prompt isolation and adequate clinical management of identified cases; WHO has published [guidance](#) in this regard;
 - keep the general population and event organizers informed on the evolution of the outbreak, and adequately monitor and address rumours and misinformation about monkeypox.
- Event organizers should establish a liaison with the relevant health authorities and be aware of the epidemiology of monkeypox in the host area.
- Gatherings should be used as opportunities for information outreach and for risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) activities; these should also target individual behaviours associated with side gatherings, unplanned congregation, and unstructured socialization in public or private spaces.
- Health authorities and event organizers should facilitate the adoption of appropriate public health and social measures, including those aimed at infection prevention and control, to decrease the risk of transmission of monkeypox virus in conjunction with the event.

- Staff responsible for dealing with people who fall ill at the event should be provided with information on how to identify and manage people with signs and symptoms consistent with monkeypox, and with the relevant personal protective equipment.
- RCCE activities including the development of communication materials for travellers on signs and symptoms consistent with monkeypox, on infection prevention and control measures, and on how to seek medical care in countries where monkeypox cases have been reported, should be considered at points of entry.

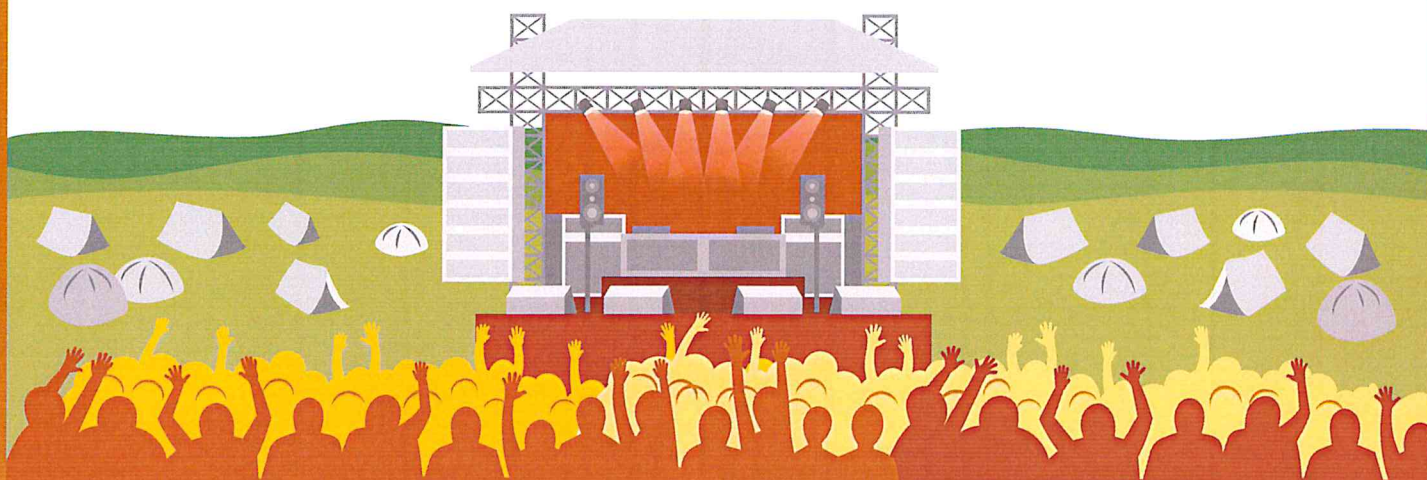
Public health advice for people organizing smaller gatherings or attending gatherings of any size and type

- People with signs and symptoms consistent with monkeypox should refrain from close contact with any other individual, should avoid attending gatherings, and should follow advice issued by relevant health authorities.
- Close contact, including sexual contact, with someone who has signs and symptoms consistent with monkeypox should be avoided.
- Anyone who feels they may have been exposed to monkeypox should exercise additional care.
- Information specifically designed for communities of gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men is now available, including updated public health [advice](#).

Gathering attendees should always be reminded to apply individual-level responsibility to their decisions and actions, with the aim of preserving their health, that of the people they interact with, and ultimately that of their community.

WHO continues to monitor the current monkeypox closely for any changes that may affect the advice included in this document. Should any factors change, WHO will issue a further update.

© World Health Organization 2022. Some rights reserved. This work is available under the [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO licence](#).
WHO reference number: WHO/MPX/Gatherings/2022.1



Public health advice on monkeypox for gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men

Updated 18 July 2022

An outbreak of a viral infection called monkeypox is currently being reported in countries that have not previously had cases. Anyone who has close contact with someone who is infectious is at risk. Cases have been identified in communities of gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men who have had recent sexual contact with a new partner or partners; but the risk is not limited to these groups.

We know that this outbreak is concerning, especially for people who are unwell, their partners, families and communities. Learning more about monkeypox can help people protect themselves and help stop its onward spread to others. Know your risk to lower your risk.

How to use this document:

The advice in this document is intended for use by individuals, community leaders, influencers, health workers and others affected by or working on the monkeypox outbreak. It contains information to help people reduce their risk of monkeypox and to help slow the spread of the virus.

Information about monkeypox is evolving rapidly. Advice may change as we learn more. Check [who.int](https://www.who.int) for the most up to date information.

What you need to know about monkeypox:

Symptoms:

If you are exposed to someone with monkeypox you could develop symptoms up to 21 days later.

Most people with monkeypox will get a rash. It can look like pimples/blisters and may be painful and itchy. The rash can be found anywhere on the body, but is often found around the genital and anal region, and on the face, palms of hands and soles of feet. It can also be found inside the mouth, throat, vagina and anus. Some people will have one or two lesions, while others can have several thousand. The rash remains infectious until it has crusted over, the scabs have fallen off and a new layer of skin formed underneath. This can take several weeks, during which you should isolate to protect others. Other symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Headaches
- Muscle aches
- Back pain
- Low energy

People may experience all or only a few of these symptoms. While some people have mild symptoms, others may develop more serious illness and need care in a health facility. Anyone who has symptoms that could be monkeypox or who has been in contact with someone who has monkeypox should call or visit a health care provider and seek their advice.

How monkeypox spreads:

Monkeypox is spread through close contact (face-to-face, skin-to-skin, mouth-to-mouth and mouth-to-skin) with someone who has monkeypox, including kissing or sexual contact. People are infectious until all their lesions have crusted over, the scabs have fallen off and a new layer of skin has formed underneath.

The virus can also spread from contaminated environments to humans, such as when a person with monkeypox touches clothing, bedding, towels, objects, electronics and surfaces. Someone who touches these items can then become infected. It is also possible to become infected from breathing in skin flakes or virus from clothing, bedding or towels.

Ulcers, lesions or sores in the mouth can also be infectious, meaning the virus can spread through direct contact with the mouth, respiratory droplets and possibly through short-range aerosols.

If you have confirmed or suspected monkeypox:

- Seek advice from your health care provider and get tested
- Self-isolate and avoid close contact with others (including sex)
- Take care of your symptoms and your physical and mental health while you isolate

You can help to stop this outbreak by:

- Learning more about how monkeypox is affecting your community
- Combating misinformation by sharing only reliable, evidence based and non-stigmatizing information from trustworthy sources
- Staying calm, taking care of your mental health and openly communicating with others

Having or being exposed to monkeypox is nothing to be ashamed of.

Anyone can get monkeypox. Stigmatizing, blaming or shaming people because of a disease is **never** ok. Stigma makes it harder to end outbreaks and can stop people from accessing services. Don't allow fear of judgment stop you from seeking the healthcare and social support you need if you have symptoms that could be monkeypox.



Frequently asked questions

What should I do if I think I have monkeypox?

If you have symptoms or have been a close contact of someone with monkeypox, contact a health worker for advice, testing and medical care. Self-isolate where possible while waiting for a test and avoid close contact with others. Mention to your health care provider that you think your symptoms could be monkeypox or that you have been exposed.

What should I do if I test positive for monkeypox?

If you do test positive for monkeypox, you will need to isolate from others until your rash has crusted over, the scabs have fallen off and a new layer of skin has grown underneath. This will help protect anyone else from becoming infected.

Your health care provider will give you advice on how to take care of yourself and whether you should recover at home or in hospital. Keep hydrated, eat well and get enough sleep. Use medication for pain and fever if needed. Take care of your rash: avoid scratching; keep lesions dry and uncovered; clean rash with sterilized water/antiseptic; rinse lesions in your mouth with saltwater and take warm baths with baking soda/Epsom salts. If your symptoms get worse, contact your health worker immediately for advice.

If you have had close contact (including sex) with anyone in the previous 21 days, consider telling them about your diagnosis so that they can be alert to symptoms. Health workers might be able to help you pass on the information anonymously if you do not feel able to do so.

What do we know about monkeypox and sex?

Monkeypox can spread through close contact of any kind, including through kissing, touching, oral and penetrative vaginal or anal sex with someone who is infectious. Anyone with new and unusual rashes should avoid sexual contact until they have had been checked for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and monkeypox. Remember that the rash can also be found in places that can be hard to see, including the mouth, throat, genitals, vagina and anus/anal area.

The monkeypox virus has been found in bodily fluids such as semen. Since it is currently unknown whether monkeypox can be spread through semen or vaginal fluids, people who have recovered from monkeypox are advised to use condoms when having all forms of sex for 12 weeks following recovery of monkeypox infection. Wearing a condom won't protect you from catching monkeypox while you are showing symptoms, but it will help protect you and others from a range of other STIs.

When possible, exchange contact details with any new sexual partners, even those you were not planning to see again. This way, you can get notified if your partner develops any monkeypox symptoms, or you can notify them if it happens to you. Reducing your number of sexual partners may reduce your risk.

How can I safely support someone with monkeypox?

Having monkeypox can be distressing for the person affected and those around them. If someone discloses to you that they have monkeypox, react without being judgmental or making any assumptions about how they have become infected. Respect their wishes as to whether they want other people to know about their illness or not.

Do all you can to help someone who is self-isolating, including helping with shopping and checking in with them regularly. Some people may struggle financially if they are unable to work during their isolation period; consider setting up support systems in whatever way you can in your community, if this is the case.

Giving people an opportunity to talk about their concerns and feelings can help. Encourage them to take care of their mental health, to eat well, stay hydrated and exercise if possible. More and more people are sharing their experiences online to help reduce stigma and feelings of shame that can arise.

How can I protect other people if I get monkeypox?

If you have monkeypox, you will need to self-isolate until you are no longer infectious. Your health care provider will help you decide if you should be cared for in hospital or at home. This will depend on how serious your symptoms are, whether you have risk factors that put you at risk of more serious symptoms, and whether you can minimize the risk of infecting anyone you live with.

If you are isolating at home, protect others you live with by:

- Isolating in a separate room
- Using a separate bathroom, or cleaning after each use
- Cleaning frequently touched surfaces with soap and water and a household disinfectant and avoiding sweeping/vacuuming
- Using separate utensils, towels, objects, electronics and bedding
- Doing your own laundry, and putting materials in a plastic bag before carrying to the washing machine
- Opening windows throughout the house to keep the space well-ventilated

If you can't avoid being in the same room as someone else, avoid touching, clean hands often, cover your rash with clothing or bandages, wear well-fitting medical masks and open windows.

Why are we seeing monkeypox spread in communities of gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men?

The risk of monkeypox is not limited to communities of men who have sex with men. Anyone who has close contact with someone who is infectious is at risk. However, data tells us that sexual encounters between men who have sex with men have played a role in transmitting monkeypox in recent months. Some men who have sex with men are connected to dynamic sexual networks that extend across different cities and countries. This may explain why we are currently seeing cases in these communities. While the virus continues to circulate in these networks, experts and advocates are urging gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men to be alert to symptoms and take care to protect themselves and others.

Communities of gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men may have strong links with sexual health services. This has been demonstrated in the current outbreak, as cases have been identified among men coming forward to be tested in sexual health clinics.

Men accessing antiretrovirals for treatment or prevention of HIV infection also receive regular screening for sexually transmitted infections. This regular contact with health services has enabled the identification of monkeypox within the community and is an opportunity to deliver vaccination and reach those who need it.

Is my risk of monkeypox higher if I am living with HIV?

People with underlying immune deficiencies may be at risk of more serious illness from monkeypox. People living with HIV who know their status and have access to and properly use treatment can reach the point of viral suppression. This means that their immune systems are less vulnerable to other infections than they would be without treatment. Studies are underway to better understand these questions. So far, men living healthily with HIV who have developed monkeypox in this outbreak have not reported worse health outcomes than others.

Where can I learn more about monkeypox?

Find answers to some of the most common questions on monkeypox here or read the WHO factsheet. Check your local official and community sources for updates on the situation near you. Many organizations supporting gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men, including HIV support organizations around the world are already providing strong leadership in offering information and support to their communities to help prevent the spread of monkeypox. Their work, also increasingly supported by broader LGBTQIA+ organizations, is central to efforts to address stigma and discrimination as well as information sharing. Reach out to trusted organizations in your country to get more information.

If you are having sex with multiple partners, seek regular screening for sexually transmitted infections and discuss with your health care provider whether you would benefit from taking PrEP.

Seeking health advice regularly and quickly, if you have symptoms, will help you get treatment if needed and avoid you infecting anyone else.