

MONKEYPOX - What You Need to Know

August 5, 2022

Skagit County Public Health

What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a viral disease that can cause rashes and other symptoms. It does not commonly occur in the U.S., but there is currently an outbreak of monkeypox with cases spreading in Washington state and across the country, as well as in many other countries. Many of the current cases are occurring in men who have sex with men, although monkeypox can spread person-to-person with any kind of close, skin-to-skin contact.

How is it spread?

Monkeypox spreads in different ways but requires close interaction with a symptomatic individual. The virus can be transmitted from person-to-person through:

- Direct contact with the infectious rash, scabs or body fluids
- Respiratory secretions during prolonged, face-to-face contact, or during intimate physical contact, such as kissing, cuddling, or sex
- Touching items (such as clothing or linens) that previously touched the infectious rash or body fluids
- Pregnant people can spread the virus to their fetus through the placenta

It is also possible for people to get monkeypox from infected animals, either by being scratched or bitten by the animal or by preparing or eating meat or using products from an infected animal.

Monkeypox can spread from the time symptoms start until the rash has fully healed. The illness typically lasts 2-4 weeks. People who do not have monkeypox symptoms cannot spread the virus to others.

Who is at risk?

Anyone can get monkeypox, but some people are at a higher risk. Unlike the virus that causes COVID-19, monkeypox is primarily spread through close contact and does not spread through the air over longer distances. Brief interactions that do not involve physical contact and health care interactions conducted using appropriate protective equipment are generally considered low risk.

While the current cases nationally and internationally mainly involve men who have sex with men, anyone who is sexually active with multiple partners or who are partners with someone who has sex with multiple partners can be at risk for being exposed to monkeypox.

Other risk factors may include travel to areas where monkeypox is spreading, close, non-sexual contact with a known case, or contact with sick animals.

To protect yourself and others from monkeypox or sexual infectious diseases, Washington State Department of Health recommends practicing safe sex methods, practice harm reduction, and avoiding sexual contact with anyone who has open wounds, sores, or rashes.



What are the signs and symptoms?

Fever and rash occur in nearly all people infected with monkeypox. Symptoms may also include headache, muscle aches and backache, swollen lymph nodes, chills and exhaustion. The rash can look like pimples or blisters that appears on the face, inside the mouth, and on other parts of the body, like the hands, feet, chest, genitals, or anus.



What should you do if you have symptoms or think you may have been exposed? are the signs and symptoms?

The Centers of Disease Control (CDC) recommends that anyone who has symptoms of monkeypox isolate themselves from others and immediately contact their healthcare provider, even if they have not had contact with someone who has monkeypox. Additional recommendations to prevent the spread of infection include:

- Isolate yourself from other people and from animals
- Do not kiss, hug, cuddle, sleep, or have sex with others
- Wear a well-fitting medical mask around others
- Do not share bedding, towels, dishes, or utensils
- Wash your own laundry and dishes
- Routinely clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces and items
- Do not use commercial travel (airplane, bus, taxi, shared car)

For more information about monkeypox, please visit:

<https://doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/illness-and-disease-z/monkeypox>.

If you have symptoms of monkeypox or think you may have been exposed, contact your health care provider or Skagit County Public Health at (360) 416-1500.

Sources:

<https://doh.wa.gov/public-health-healthcare-providers/notifiable-conditions/rare-disease-public-health-significance/monkeypox>

<https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/resources/graphics.html>

