

How to Protect Yourself and Others from Monkeypox

As monkeypox spreads in New York City (NYC), across the country and globally, the following information can help you protect yourself and others.

How is monkeypox spreading?

In the current outbreak, the monkeypox virus:

- Is spreading mainly during oral, anal and vaginal sex and other intimate contact such as rimming, hugging, kissing, biting, cuddling and massage
- Can spread through direct contact with a rash or sores of someone who has the virus; from coming into contact with clothing, bedding, towels or other items they have used; and from prolonged face-to-face contact
- Spreads when people have symptoms, but experts are still studying whether it spreads before symptoms start or after they end
- May spread through semen, saliva, feces (poop) and other body fluids — experts are still studying whether this is possible

What can happen if I get monkeypox?

In the current outbreak, hospitalization and death from monkeypox are rare. The most common symptom is a rash or sores that may look like pimples or blisters. The rash and sores may be all over the body or on certain parts, including around and inside the genitals, anus and mouth, and last for two to four weeks. The rash can be extremely itchy and painful and interfere with daily activities. Sores in the anus or urethra can make it hard to go to the bathroom. Some people also have flu-like symptoms such as sore throat, fever and fatigue. Complications from monkeypox infection include inflammation of the rectal lining (proctitis). Even after healing, people can have scarring in the areas where they had sores. We do not know if monkeypox causes long-term health problems.

Who is at the highest risk of getting monkeypox?

Anyone can get monkeypox. However, based on current cases, the virus is spreading within social circles of gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men; transgender people; gender-nonconforming people; and nonbinary people. People in these social circles who have **multiple or anonymous sex partners** are at high risk of exposure. Having anonymous sex or other intimate contact, including with people at raves, clubs and sex parties, in saunas, or through online apps or social media, increases the risk for exposure. Since monkeypox can be transmitted through any type of prolonged skin-to-skin contact, going to clubs, raves, concerts, large parties and other crowded events may also increase the risk if you or others wear clothing that exposes your skin.

Who is at high risk of severe disease from monkeypox?

People who have conditions that weaken their immune system, including HIV, are pregnant, or have a history of atopic dermatitis (eczema) or certain other skin conditions may be at increased risk for severe disease.

What can I do to protect myself?

While the current outbreak continues, the best way to protect yourself from monkeypox is to avoid sex and other intimate contact with multiple or anonymous partners.

If you choose to have sex or other intimate contact, the following can help reduce your risk, even if you have been vaccinated:

- Reduce your number of partners, especially those you do not know or whose recent sexual history you do not know.
- Avoid sex parties, circuit parties and other spaces where people are having sex and other intimate contact with multiple people.
- Ask your partners whether they have monkeypox symptoms and about their recent sexual history. Remember, some people may not know they have monkeypox, especially if they have only mild symptoms or symptoms that may be confused with other conditions.
- Do not have sex or intimate contact with anyone who feels unwell, especially if they have a rash or sores or were recently exposed to monkeypox.
- If you choose to have sex or other intimate contact with someone while they are sick, cover all rashes and sores with clothing or sealed bandages. This may reduce spread from contact with the rash or sores, but other methods of transmission may still be possible.
- Since it may be possible the virus can be transmitted through semen, use latex condoms during sex.
- Do not share towels, clothing, fetish gear, sex toys or toothbrushes.
- Wash your hands, fetish gear and bedding. Sex toys should be washed after each use or sex act.

What do I do if I have symptoms?

If you have monkeypox symptoms, even if they are mild:

- Call your health care provider immediately. If you do not have one, call **311** to get connected to an NYC Health + Hospitals (H+H) location or to access **H+H Virtual Express Care**. You can also visit nyc.gov/health/map to find a provider near you. Care is available in NYC regardless of immigration status, insurance coverage or ability to pay.
- Avoid all close physical contact with others, including people you live with. Also, avoid clubs, parties, bars and other crowded places.
- Learn more about how to take care of yourself and reduce the risk of spreading the virus to others at nyc.gov/monkeypox.

If you recently had monkeypox, use a latex condom during sex for at least eight weeks after your rash and sores have healed and a new layer of skin has developed — this will help protect your partners in case the virus can be transmitted by semen.

What should I do if a partner I have been intimate with tells me they have monkeypox?

If you have been recently exposed to someone with monkeypox, watch for symptoms, especially a new rash or sores anywhere on your body. Visit nyc.gov/monkeypox to learn more about whether you are eligible for vaccination, and call **311** for information about testing or treatment if you develop symptoms.

Is there a vaccine for monkeypox?

The JYNNEOS vaccine has been approved for people ages 18 and older to prevent monkeypox. Experts believe the vaccine can help protect people when given before exposure to the virus, and reduce the risk of infection or severe illness if given shortly after an exposure. However, we do not have real-world data on how well the JYNNEOS vaccine protects people from monkeypox. Therefore, it is important to continue other prevention measures, even if you are vaccinated and especially if you are at high risk of severe illness from monkeypox. Vaccine supply from the federal government remains limited, but NYC is advocating for additional supply and hopes to receive it soon. To stay up to date on vaccine availability, text MONKEYPOX to 692-692 or MONKEYPOXESP for Spanish.

The NYC Health Department may change recommendations as the situation evolves. 7.28.22