



## Monkeypox in the United States: What You Need to Know

### What is monkeypox?

**Monkeypox** is a rare disease caused by the monkeypox virus belonging to the *Orthopoxvirus* genus. It was first identified in 1958 during two outbreaks in monkeys kept for research. The first human case of monkeypox was in 1970. Endemic to Central and West African countries, cases have been identified in other countries in 2022. The U.S. confirmed a case on May 18, 2022.

### What does a monkeypox infection look like?

Symptoms develop five to 21 days after exposure (called the incubation period). Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Headaches
- Muscle or back aches
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Chills
- Exhaustion

Within one to three days after the occurrence of fever, a rash develops, typically beginning on the face and spreading across the body. In the advanced stages of the disease, the rash can be severe and become widespread.

The illness typically lasts for two to four weeks. The images below show how the lesions may look as they develop, crust over, and form scabs.



Gov.uk, "Monkeypox: background information" Retrieved May 2022. Monkeypox: background information

## How does someone “catch” monkeypox?

- People with monkeypox are considered infectious from the time that symptoms begin until the lesions have crusted.
- Exposure occurs by:
  - Breathing in respiratory droplets from an infected person; and/or,
  - Directly or indirectly touching infected body fluids, lesions, or contaminated clothing or linen.

## Treatment

There is currently no proven treatment for monkeypox infection. There are, however, safe and approved vaccines, antivirals, and other therapies that can be used for preventing disease in exposed or high-risk people.

## Who is at risk of getting monkeypox?

According to the CDC, the current risk to the public of contracting monkeypox appears to be low. If you have symptoms of monkeypox (such as rash or lesions like those in the photos above), contact your healthcare provider. This includes persons who have:

- Recently traveled to countries where monkeypox cases have been reported; and/or,
- Had contact with a person who has a similar rash or has confirmed/suspected monkeypox. \*

*\*The CDC also suggests elevated concern in certain populations based on sexual risk factors, but the absence of such does not mean that you should not seek medical attention if you have symptoms.*

## More Resources

CDC Health Alert Network, Monkeypox Virus Infection in the United States and Other Non-Endemic Countries. Retrieved 2022. <https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/2022/han00466.asp>

CDC, Monkeypox. Retrieved May 2022. <https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/2022/han00466.asp>



The Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) is the leading professional association for infection preventionists (IPs) with more than 15,000 members. Our mission is to create a safer world through the prevention of infection.

[apic.org](https://apic.org)  
[infectionpreventionandyou.org](https://infectionpreventionandyou.org)

