

## Monkeypox: Information for Workers

### What is Monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a zoonotic disease spread between animals and people, and from people to people. The disease is caused by infection with the monkeypox virus, which is part of the same family of viruses as smallpox called orthopoxviruses. Monkeypox was first discovered in 1958 when two outbreaks of a pox-like disease occurred in colonies of monkeys kept for research.

### What are the symptoms?

Monkeypox symptoms are similar to smallpox symptoms. Symptoms include:

- A rash that can look like pimples or blisters that appears on the face, inside the mouth, on hands, feet, the chest, genitals, or anus.
- The rash goes through different stages before healing completely.
- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches and backache
- Chills
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Exhaustion

### How can I become infected?

- Research is ongoing, and information is subject to change. As of 7/26/22, it is believed people can become infected:
  - Through direct person-to-person contact of the infectious rash or scabs
  - Through respiratory secretions during prolonged, face-to-face contact, or during intimate physical contact
  - By touching items (such as clothing or linens) that previously touched the infectious rash or body fluids
  - Through a pregnant person spreading the virus to a fetus through their placenta

Monkeypox can spread 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. People who do not have monkeypox symptoms cannot spread the virus to others.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022) & New York State Dept of Health [NYSDOH] (2022)  
Updated 7.26.22

### Is there a vaccine?

Some groups may be eligible for a vaccine that can help reduce the chance and severity of infection if exposed to the virus. *Monkeypox Vaccine Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)* refers to administering vaccine to someone at high risk for monkeypox (for example, laboratory workers who handle specimens that might contain monkeypox virus). JYNNEOSM – also known as Imvamune or Imvanex – is the most recommended vaccine against monkeypox. It is administered via two doses, four weeks apart. People are considered fully vaccinated about two weeks after their second shot.

People who should get Monkeypox Vaccine PrEP include:

- Have had multiple or anonymous sex partners in the last 14 days in an area with known cases of monkeypox
- Clinical laboratory personnel who perform testing to diagnose orthopoxviruses
- Research laboratory workers who directly handle cultures or animals contaminated or infected with orthopoxviruses that infect humans
- Certain healthcare and public health response team members designated by public health authorities to be vaccinated for preparedness purposes

Eligibility for monkeypox vaccination may change as the outbreak evolves and based on vaccine supply. Contact NYC Dept of Health for vaccine appointments. <https://vax4nyc.nyc.gov/patient/s/monkeypox> or to schedule an appointment by phone call 877-VAX-4NYC or 877-829-4692.

### Is there specific treatment for the virus?

There are no treatments specifically for monkeypox virus infections. However, monkeypox and smallpox viruses are genetically similar, which means that antiviral drugs and vaccines developed to protect against smallpox may be used to prevent and treat monkeypox virus infections.

*Monkeypox Vaccine Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)* may be given 4-14 days after the date of exposure and may

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reduce the symptoms of disease but may not prevent the illness.

### How can I protect myself at work?

- In healthcare settings, isolate infected patients from others who could be at risk for infection.
- Use personal protective equipment (PPE) when caring for patients.
- **WASH YOUR HANDS often and with soap, for at least 20 seconds** or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
  - You have the right to access the bathroom whenever you need to, including to wash your hands (29 CFR 1910.141).
  - Handwashing with soap and water is **significantly MORE EFFECTIVE** than using hand sanitizer. To avoid the spread of COVID-19, hand sanitizer is not a sufficient substitute for handwashing, and should *only* be used as a last resort. Hand sanitizer should have at least 60% alcohol. For more information, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/show-me-the-science-hand-sanitizer.html>.
  - Follow reputable sources of health information, including NYSDOH, CDC, and your local county health department.

### Do I need to wear personal protective equipment (PPE?)

Workers in some sectors may have increased risk of occupational exposure to Monkeypox. **It is the employer's responsibility to conduct a hazard assessment of the workplace and of the workers' tasks** (29 CFR 1910.132(d)). The need for PPE is determined based on the hazard assessment. If PPE is deemed necessary, it is the employer's responsibility to provide it to the employee at no cost (29 CFR 1910.132(h), as well as to provide training on how to use the PPE correctly (29 CFR 1910.132(f)).

### What should I do if I feel sick?

- Do not come in to work.
  - Under NYC's Paid Sick Leave Law, you are guaranteed up to 40 hours of sick leave per year. You might have more sick time under your union contract or employer's policy.

- You do not need a doctor's note until you are out for 3 or more consecutive days.
- See your healthcare provider – if you don't have a provider or health insurance, visit a public health clinic near you
- When you see a healthcare provider for possible monkeypox, remind them that this virus is circulating in the community

### What should I do if I've been exposed or have symptoms of monkeypox?

You should talk to your healthcare provider for current guidance on isolation, infection control, and treatment. People with monkeypox should isolate until rash has fully resolved, the scabs have fallen off, and a fresh layer of intact skin has formed.

### Who can I contact for more information?

- **Centers for Disease Control:**
  - **English/Spanish** 800-232-4636
  - **Other Languages** 877-696-6775
- **NYS Department of Health- [www.health.ny.gov](http://www.health.ny.gov)**