

How To Protect Yourself and Others From Mpox

Mpox is a contagious disease caused by *Monkeypox virus*. In the U.S., cases have mainly spread through sex and other intimate contact, mostly among social networks of gay men and other men who have sex with men and transgender people. However, anyone who has been in close contact with someone who has mpox is at risk for infection. The following information can help you protect yourself and others from mpox.

How does mpox spread?

- It can spread through direct contact with a rash or sores of someone who has mpox; through contact with upper respiratory secretions (such as mucus or snot) or saliva from someone who has mpox; and through contact with clothing, bedding, towels or other items used by someone who has mpox, which is less common. It can also spread if the virus is passed from a pregnant person to a fetus during pregnancy or to a newborn during or after birth.
- In the U.S., it has spread mainly during oral, anal and vaginal sex and other intimate contact such as rimming, hugging, kissing, biting, cuddling and massage.
- It can also spread to people through direct contact with an infected animal, including during activities such hunting and trapping; through contact with fluids or waste; and by getting bitten or scratched, although this is not how the virus is spreading in the U.S.
- It mostly spreads when people have symptoms, but it may spread between one to four days before people have symptoms. Currently, no evidence suggests people who never have symptoms can spread the virus, but experts are still studying this.
- It may spread through semen, feces (poop) and other body fluids — experts are studying whether this is possible.

What can happen if I get mpox?

Hospitalization and death from mpox 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 mpox 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 mpox causes long-term health problems.

Who is at the highest risk of getting mpox?

Having multiple sex partners, or sex or other intimate contact with people whose sexual health history you do not know, increases the risk for exposure. Since mpox 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 mpox?

People who have HIV (especially those who have a low CD4 count or are not regularly taking HIV medication) or other conditions that weaken their immune system are at increased risk of severe illness and complications from mpox. People who are pregnant or have a history of atopic dermatitis (eczema) or certain other skin conditions may also be at increased risk for severe illness.

What can I do to protect myself?

Get vaccinated against mpox with two doses of the JYNNEOS vaccine if you may have been exposed or may be in the future. For more information about vaccination, visit nyc.gov/mpox.

Another important way to protect yourself against mpox is by avoiding sex and other intimate contact with multiple partners or partners whose sexual health history you do not know. If you 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 mpox symptoms and about their recent sexual history. Remember, some people may not know they have mpox, 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 mpox.
- If you have sex or other intimate contact with someone while you or 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 that 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.

What should I do if I have symptoms, even if they are mild?

- Call your health care provider immediately. If you do not have one:
 - Call NYC Health + Hospitals' Virtual ExpressCare at 631-EXP-Care (631-397-2273), 24/7, or visit expresscare.nyc for low- to no-cost care, regardless of immigration status.
 - Visit an NYC Health Department Sexual Health Clinic — learn more at nyc.gov/health/sexualhealthclinics.
 - Visit nyc.gov/health/map to find a provider near you.

- Avoid all close physical contact with others, including people you live with. Also, avoid clubs, parties, bars and other crowded places.
- Wear a well-fitting face mask. Sit at least six feet away from others if eating or drinking without a mask.
- Learn more about how to take care of yourself and reduce the risk of spreading mpox to others at nyc.gov/mpox.

If you recently had mpox, 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 someone I have been intimate with tells me they have mpox?

If you have been recently exposed to someone with mpox, you should get vaccinated. The two-dose JYNNEOS vaccine can reduce the risk of infection and severe illness if received shortly after an exposure. To find a vaccination site, visit vaccinefinder.nyc.gov. You should also watch for symptoms, especially a new rash or sores anywhere on your body. If you develop symptoms, follow the guidance in this document.