

Mpox Talking Points

1. What is Mpox (formerly called Monkeypox)?

Mpox is a virus that can infect anyone, no matter their age, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Cases have been identified in many countries around the world including many states here in the U.S. and the District of Columbia. The strain of mpox currently circulating is rarely fatal with most cases not requiring hospitalization, however, it is still quite contagious, and symptoms can be unpleasant and painful.

2. Who can contract mpox?

Anyone can become infected with mpox no matter their age, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation despite a disproportionate number of cases being identified in MSM.

3. How is mpox spread?

Mpox spreads in a few ways.

- Mpox can spread to anyone through close, personal, often skin-to-skin contact, including:
 - Direct contact with mpox rash, scabs, or body fluids from a person with mpox.
 - Touching objects, fabrics (clothing, bedding, or towels), and surfaces that have been used by someone with mpox.
 - Contact with respiratory secretions.
- This direct contact can happen during intimate contact, including:
 - Oral, anal, and vaginal sex or touching the genitals (penis, testicles, labia, and vagina) or anus (butthole) of a person with mpox.
 - Hugging, massage, and kissing.
 - Prolonged face-to-face contact.
 - Touching fabrics and objects during sex that were used by a person with mpox and that have not been disinfected, such as bedding, towels, fetish gear, and sex toys.
- A pregnant person can spread the virus to their fetus through the placenta.

4. Can you get mpox from having sex?

Mpox can be transmitted during **ANY** activity that includes skin to skin contact including sex. In other words, sex is just one of the ways that mpox can be spread.

5. What are the symptoms of mpox?

People with mpox get a rash that may be located on or near the genitals (penis, testicles, labia, and vagina) or anus (butthole) and could be on other areas like the hands, feet, chest, face, or mouth.

- The rash will go through several stages, including scabs, before healing.

- The rash can initially look like pimples or blisters. It usually appears on the face, inside the mouth and other parts of the body (e.g., hands, feet, genital area)
- Flu like symptoms are most common. This can include:
 - Fever
 - Chills
 - Swollen lymph nodes
 - Exhaustion
 - Muscle aches and backache
 - Headache
 - Respiratory symptoms (e.g., sore throat, nasal congestion, or cough)
- You may experience all or only a few symptoms.
- Sometimes, people have flu-like symptoms before the rash.
- Some people get a rash first, followed by other symptoms.

6. How long is a person with mpox contagious?

A person with mpox can spread it to others 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.

7. How do you protect yourself from mpox?

Take the following steps to prevent getting mpox:

- Avoid close, skin-to-skin contact with people who have a suspicious rash that looks like mpox.
- Do not touch the rash or scabs of a person with mpox.
- Do not kiss, hug, cuddle, or have sex with someone with mpox.
- Avoid contact with objects and materials that a person with mpox has used.
 - Do not share eating utensils or cups with a person with mpox.
 - Do not handle or touch the bedding, towels, or clothing of a person with mpox.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially before eating or touching your face and after you use the bathroom.

8. What treatments are available for mpox?

There are no treatments specifically for mpox virus infections. However, mpox 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 mpox virus infections.

- Antivirals, such as tecovirimat (TPOXX), are recommended for people who are more likely to get severely ill, like patients with weakened immune systems. [DC Health has been collaborating with local providers and CDC partners to make sure TPOXX is available in DC for those that need it.](#)

9. What should a person do if they think they have mpox?

If you are experiencing symptoms or need a test, contact your doctor for a health assessment. Until you can see a healthcare provider and while awaiting test results:

- Isolate immediately
- Avoid close contact (including intimate physical contact) with others
- Avoid close contact with pets or other animals.

10. How should a person who has or had mpox handle cleaning and disinfecting?

Proper cleaning of all exposed items is essential following a case of mpox. Poxviruses can survive in linens, clothing and on surfaces. In one study, investigators found live virus 15 days after a patient's home was left unoccupied. Porous materials (bedding, clothing, etc.) may harbor live virus for longer periods of time than non-porous (plastic, glass, metal) surfaces. People who have recovered from mpox and whose isolation period has ended should clean and disinfect all spaces within the home they were in contact with.

- If cleaning and disinfection is done by someone other than the person with mpox, that person should wear, at a minimum, disposable medical gloves and a respirator or well-fitting mask. Clothing that fully covers the skin should be worn, and immediately laundered. Wash hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Use an EPA-recommended disinfectant. Focus on disinfecting items and surfaces that were in direct contact with the skin. Do not dry dust or sweep as this may spread infectious particles.

11. Do you have to quarantine or isolate when you have mpox? What is the difference?

Unlike COVID-19 which can spread to others even when no symptoms are present, current data suggests mpox is only spread by people showing symptoms. Individuals exposed to mpox do **NOT** need to quarantine, however, they DO need to monitor themselves for 21 days for signs and symptoms of infection.

- Once a person shows symptoms of mpox, they should isolate at home (or another appropriate location) for the duration of the illness (or until they receive a negative mpox test result). A person should isolate until all symptoms have resolved, including full healing of the rash with formation of a fresh layer of skin.
- If a person must leave their isolation location (e.g., to see a healthcare provider). they should:
 - Wear a well-fitting mask
 - Keep lesions covered with clothing, gloves, or bandages.
 - Avoid public areas (e.g., crowds, congregate settings) including public transportation.

12. Have children been infected by mpox? What precautions should parents take?

- Mpox can infect anyone regardless of age, however children are generally considered low risk. Any risk of exposure comes primarily from their parents or caregivers.
- Parents and caregivers who meet eligibility criteria should get vaccinated to protect their children from potential exposure. Other adult family members or people living in a home with children who meet eligibility criteria should also get vaccinated.

13. Is there a vaccine to prevent mpox?

- Because mpox and smallpox viruses are genetically similar, vaccines developed to protect against smallpox viruses may be used to prevent mpox infections.
- The U.S. government has two stockpiled vaccines—JYNNEOS and ACAM2000—that can prevent mpox in people who are exposed to the virus.

14. Who should get vaccinated for mpox?

CDC recommends vaccination for people who have been exposed to mpox and people who may be more likely to get mpox. People more likely to get mpox include:

- People who have been identified by public health officials as a contact of someone with mpox
- People who are aware that one of their sexual partners in the past 2 weeks has been diagnosed with mpox
- People who had multiple sexual partners in the past 2 weeks in an area with known mpox

15. What is the mpox vaccine strategy in the District?

- JYNNEOS™ (also known as Imvamune or Imvanex) is an attenuated live virus vaccine which has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for the prevention of mpox.
- DC Health is using an intradermal injection mpox vaccine strategy that increases the number of doses available to eligible District residents.
- Under this vaccination strategy, the mpox vaccine is administered between the layers of skin rather than below the skin. Vaccinations offered through this strategy have been shown to elicit a similar immune response and provide the same level of protection as the previous administration technique, while allowing for additional doses of vaccine to be made available.

16. What is DC's eligibility criteria for the mpox vaccine?

DC's updated eligibility criteria includes District residents, individuals who work in the District, students enrolled at District universities/colleges, and persons affiliated with DC Health Programs that receive health care services in DC, and 18 years of age or older, who meet one of the following criteria:

- All people, of any sexual orientation or gender, who have had multiple sexual partners in the past 2 weeks, including those currently considered highest risk: gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men, transgender men, and transgender women; or
- Men who have sex with men who are non-monogamous (pre-exposure prophylaxis); or
- Sex workers (of any sexual orientation or gender); or
- Staff (of any sexual orientation or gender) at establishments where sexual activity occurs (e.g., bathhouses, saunas, sex clubs)

17. Where can people get vaccinated for mpox in the District?

DC Health operates three mpox vaccination clinics located at:

- 3640 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave SE – Ward 8
- 7530 Georgia Ave NW – Ward 4
- 1900 I St NW – Ward 2

Individuals should pre-register to get vaccinated at preventmonkeypox.dc.gov. Once appointments become available, eligible individuals who have pre-registered will receive an email invitation to make a vaccination appointment. Even if residents don't meet the vaccine eligibility criteria, they are still encouraged to pre-register. As eligibility expands, people who have already registered will be notified about available appointments.

Walk-up vaccinations are available from noon until 8 pm on Fridays, or while supply lasts, at all three clinics. Walk-up vaccinations are provided on a first-come, first-served basis to eligible residents who have not already received the mpox vaccine.

18. DC Mpox Data (as of Wednesday 9/20)

- There are 488 confirmed mpox cases in the District
- DC Health has provided 34,422 doses, and we continue to administer almost 900 doses per day.

The data is updated on PreventMonkeyPox.dc.gov every Wednesday by 11 am EST.