



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Monkeypox

Although the risk to the general population is small, it is good to be aware of what monkeypox is and what to do if you have concerns.

What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a rare disease caused by a viral infection. Monkeypox was first discovered in 1958 in colonies of monkeys, hence the name.

What are the symptoms of monkeypox?

Infection typically has two phases.

PHASE ONE:

A person can feel generally unwell with a fever, intense headache, swollen lymph nodes, back pain, muscle aches and fatigue. This usually lasts between 1-5 days.

PHASE TWO:

About 1-5 days after the fever, a rash appears. The rash may first contain flat and raised lesions which progress to small, fluid-filled blisters. The blisters often change to large red bumps with pus. Eventually the rash crusts and scales off.

The rash typically begins on the face and genitals. It then spreads to other parts of the body including the palms of hands/soles of the feet, mouth, and eyes.

Most monkeypox infections last approximately 2-4 weeks.

A person is infectious with monkeypox during the first phase of the illness (fever, headache, swollen lymph nodes, muscle aches, fatigue). The rash lesions are considered infectious until the scabs fall off and new skin can be seen.

How soon after exposure to monkeypox would symptoms appear?

It can take 5-21 days (typically 7-14) for symptoms to appear after an exposure to monkeypox.

How is monkeypox spread?

Monkeypox spreads when a person comes into contact with the virus from an animal, human, or materials contaminated with the virus. The virus enters the body through broken skin (even if not visible), the respiratory tract, or the mucous membranes (eyes, nose, or mouth).

The disease can affect anyone of any gender identity or sexual orientation, however, it has particularly impacted men in the 2SGBTQ+ community who have recently had sex with other men.

How serious is monkeypox?

Risk to human health posed by monkeypox is low. Monkeypox infection typically resolves on its own with symptoms lasting between 2-4 weeks. Although more severe cases can occur, they are rare (less than 10%).

How is monkeypox treated?

There are not many treatment options at this time for monkeypox infections, however, a vaccine can be given to prevent or minimize illness if administered within a certain timeframe. The vaccine has to be given before symptoms of the illness appear in order to be effective. See information about the monkeypox vaccine (Imvamune) below.

What is Imvamune?

Imvamune is a live attenuated, non-replicating vaccine that is approved in Canada for protection against smallpox, monkeypox, and other orthopoxvirus related illness.

You may be eligible for the vaccine if you are transgender or identify as belonging to the gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men community, and answer yes to any of the questions below:

- Have had two or more sexual partners within the past 21 days (three weeks);
- Have received a diagnosis of bacterial sexually-transmitted infection (STI) in the past two months;
- Have attended venues or other locations for sexual contact within the past 21 days (e.g., bath-houses, sex clubs, park play) or may be planning to;
- Have had anonymous/casual sex in the past 21 days (e.g., using apps, online sites, formal/informal gatherings) or may be planning to;
- Engage in sex work or may be planning to, either as a worker or a client; and
- Have been advised by public health that you may be at risk.

What is being done in Canada and BC about monkeypox?

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, there are 745 confirmed cases of monkeypox in the country as of July 27, 2022. There are 58 confirmed cases in BC. There are also people who may have been exposed to monkeypox or shown symptoms or signs. Individuals who have confirmed or suspected cases will be advised to isolate and their contacts monitored to help prevent further spread of monkeypox.

BC continues to work closely with the Public Health Agency of Canada.

The Regional Health Authorities (including the regional teams of the FNHA) in collaboration with the BC Centre for Disease Control are monitoring the situation in BC to coordinate public health response.

Updates on the monkeypox situation in BC can be found here:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/monkeypox>

Health care professionals can find the latest information and updates here:
<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/monkeypox>

What should I do if I have been exposed to monkeypox?

Public health throughout BC is reaching out to known contacts of any monkeypox cases who are at risk of developing the infection. An individual may be eligible and advised by public health to undergo post-exposure prophylaxis.

Monitor for symptoms if you have had contact with a person with known or suspect monkeypox

If you think you have been exposed but have not yet heard from public health, you can contact your [regional health authority's local public health office](#) or your health care provider who can assist you with this process.

If you do not have access to a health care provider, contact the [FNHA Virtual Doctor of the Day](#)

What should I do if I develop symptoms of monkeypox?

If you are concerned that you may have symptoms of monkeypox or may have been exposed to a known or suspected case of monkeypox, contact your health care provider.

If you do not have access to a health care provider, contact the [FNHA Virtual Doctor of the Day](#) or find a [clinic here](#).

Until you see a healthcare provider:

- Avoid close, intimate contact and sex with others.
- Avoid close contact with those at greater risk of severe illness including pregnant people, people with weakened immune systems or children.
- Cover any sores or blisters as much as possible with clothing or bandages. Wear a mask when you are in close contact with others.
- If possible, have someone else care for your animals/pets so you do not spread monkeypox to animals. If you do need to care for your animals while ill, take the same precautions that you use to protect people.
- Dispose masks, bandages, or other contaminated materials in a high quality garbage bag and keep in an animal-proof receptacle to prevent access by pets/wild animals (particularly rodents).

General steps to prevent spread of infection such hand washing and staying home when feeling unwell are good ways to protect yourself and others.

What else do I need to know?

Monkeypox can be spread to animals, including your pets. If you have/suspect you have monkeypox, arrange for someone to take care of your pets. Be careful when disposing materials that may have been contaminated and ensure you dispose of them in an animal-proof receptacle

Learn more about Communicable Disease Control at FNHA.ca:
<https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/communicable-disease-control>