

Monkeypox Virus Fact Sheet

- 1. What is Monkeypox?** - Monkeypox is a viral disease that occurs mainly in the rain forest countries of Central and West Africa. It is considered endemic in several African countries. Monkeypox was first discovered in laboratory monkeys in 1958; blood tests found that the virus originated in rodents. In 1970, Monkeypox was reported in humans for the first time. In June 2003, it was inadvertently imported into the United States in a shipment of exotic African rodents, resulting in transfer of the virus to American prairie dogs with subsequent transmission to humans.
- 2. What is the cause of Monkeypox?** - Monkeypox is caused by the Monkeypox virus, which belongs to the Orthopoxvirus group of viruses. Other Orthopoxviruses that cause infections in humans include variola (smallpox), vaccinia (used for smallpox vaccine), and cowpox viruses. There are 2 distinct strains of the Monkeypox virus: the Central African strain and the West African strain. The West African strain is typically associated with less severe illness.
- 3. What are the symptoms of Monkeypox?** - In humans, Monkeypox is similar to smallpox, although infection is usually mild, and many patients are asymptomatic. The incubation period for Monkeypox is about 12 days (range 7 to 17 days). The illness begins with fever, headache, muscle aches, backache, swollen lymph nodes, a general feeling of discomfort, and exhaustion. Typically, within 1 to 3 days after the appearance of fever, the patient develops a papular rash (i.e., raised fluid-filled bumps), often first on the face but sometimes initially on other parts of the body, and can include the genital and perianal areas. The lesions usually develop through several stages before crusting and healing over the course of 2-4 weeks.
- 4. How long does Monkeypox last?** – Patients are considered infectious from initial symptoms until all skin lesions crust and heal. This typically lasts 2 to 4 weeks.
- 5. Is Monkeypox fatal?** – To date, there have been no deaths reported in the United States due to the Monkeypox virus. Studies of human Monkeypox infections in rural Central and West Africa – where people live in remote areas and are medically underserved – have reported case-fatality ratios of 1% to 10%. Additionally, the Monkeypox virus detected in cases in the United States so far belong to the West African strain, which is associated with a lower mortality rate than the Central African Strain.
- 6. How do people get Monkeypox?** - Monkeypox virus can spread to humans from an infected animal through an animal bite or direct contact with the animal's lesions or body fluids. Monkeypox virus can spread from person to person; however, it is not easily transmitted person to person. The virus is transmitted by respiratory droplets during direct and prolonged face-to-face contact (within a 6-foot radius for >3 hours). In addition, it is possible for Monkeypox to spread by direct contact with body fluids of an infected person or with virus-contaminated objects, such as bedding or clothing. There is a concern about an increased risk of transmission during sexual and intimate contact especially between men who have sexual intercourse with men.
- 7. Is there a treatment or vaccine for Monkeypox?** – Most patients have mild illness and require no treatment. Primarily the treatment, when needed, is supportive but there is an antiviral that treats Monkeypox and there are 2 vaccines against Monkeypox.

These vaccines may help prevent Monkeypox infection and can be used for post exposure vaccination. Post exposure vaccination prevents infection in a known exposed person such as those persons who have had close or intimate contact with the virus. These persons can be vaccinated up to 14 days after exposure.

Please contact the health department at: 704-216-8784 if you are in need of a Monkeypox vaccine.

8. What should I do if I think I have Monkeypox, or any unexplained rash and symptoms?

First, please call your Primary Care provider to speak with them over the phone on your symptoms and concerns. Your healthcare team must order the test for Monkeypox at this time.

If you do not have a Primary Care provider, please call the health department at 704-216-8784 to speak with the Communicable Disease department. These trained nurses will assist you in getting information, reviewing symptoms, getting tested if applicable, and getting access to vaccination if needed.

You should isolate from others and from those in your home, including sharing separate bathrooms, bedding, and utensils.

For more information about Monkeypox:

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/response/2022/index.html>
2. <https://epi.dph.ncdhhs.gov/cd/diseases/monkeypox.html>

This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician and for specific clinical information.