

# Frequently Asked Questions

Please refer to [Clinician FAQs](#) for clinical questions.

## Basics

### What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a rare disease caused by infection with the monkeypox virus. Monkeypox virus is part of the same family of viruses as smallpox. Monkeypox symptoms are similar to smallpox symptoms, but milder, and monkeypox is rarely fatal.

Monkeypox was discovered in 1958 when two outbreaks of a pox-like disease occurred in colonies of monkeys kept for research. Despite being named “monkeypox,” the source of the disease remains unknown. However, African rodents and non-human primates (like monkeys) might harbor the virus and infect people.

The first human case of monkeypox was recorded in 1970. Since then, monkeypox has been reported in people in several other central and western African countries.

Prior to the 2022 outbreak, nearly all monkeypox cases in people outside of Africa were linked to international travel to countries where the disease commonly occurs, or through imported animals, including two cases in the United States in 2021. These cases occurred on multiple continents.

### Is monkeypox deadly?

Infections with the strain of monkeypox virus identified in this outbreak—the West African strain—are rarely fatal. Over 99% of people who get this form of the disease are likely to survive. However, people with weakened immune systems, children under 8 years of age, people with a history of eczema, and people who are pregnant or breastfeeding may be more likely to get seriously ill or die.

Although the West African strain is rarely fatal, symptoms can be extremely painful, and people might have permanent scarring resulting from the rash.

### Am I likely to get monkeypox?

At this time, the risk of monkeypox in the United States is believed to be low. Monkeypox does not spread easily between people, and the time between exposure and when symptoms start gives health officials more time to track down contacts and break the chain of infection. People who do not have monkeypox symptoms cannot spread the virus to others.

## Symptoms

### What are the symptoms of monkeypox?

Symptoms of monkeypox include:

symptoms of monkeypox can include:

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

Sometimes, people get a rash first, followed by other symptoms. Others only experience a rash.

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## What should I do if I have symptoms?




- See a healthcare provider if you notice a new or unexplained rash or other monkeypox symptoms.
- Remind the healthcare provider that monkeypox is circulating.
- Avoid close contact (including intimate physical contact) with others until a healthcare provider examines you.
- Avoid close contact with pets or other animals until a healthcare provider examines you.
- If you're waiting for test results, follow the same precautions.
- If your test is positive, stay isolated until your rash has healed, all scabs have fallen off, and a fresh layer of intact skin has formed.

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## Spread

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### How does monkeypox spread, and how contagious is it?



Monkeypox spreads in different ways. The virus can spread from person-to-person through direct contact with the infectious rash, scabs, or body fluids. It also can be spread by respiratory secretions during prolonged, face-to-face contact, or during intimate physical contact, such as kissing, cuddling, or sex. In addition, pregnant people can spread the virus to their fetus through the placenta.

Touching items (such as clothing or linens) that previously touched the infectious rash or body fluids is another way monkeypox spreads. It's also possible for people to get monkeypox from infected animals, either by being scratched or bitten by the animal or by eating meat or using products from an infected animal.

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

Monkeypox can spread from the time symptoms start until the rash has fully healed and a fresh layer of skin has formed. This can take several weeks.

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### Can I get monkeypox from having sex?



Even though it is not considered a sexually transmitted infection, monkeypox can spread during intimate physical contact between people. This contact can happen when you have sex, including:

- Oral, anal, and vaginal sex, or touching the genitals or anus of a person with monkeypox

- Hugging, massage, kissing or talking closely
- Touching fabrics, shared surfaces, and objects, such as bedding, towels and sex toys, that were used by a person with monkeypox

Anyone – regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation – can catch monkeypox if they have close contact with someone infected with the virus.

## What is CDC doing to prevent monkeypox from spreading further?

U.S. officials have responded to monkeypox before. We have the tools to effectively respond to this outbreak.

Currently, CDC is:

- Consulting with other countries experiencing monkeypox clusters,
- Providing advice to U.S. state, tribal, and local health departments related to tracking potential cases, contact tracing, and responding to additional identified cases,
- Supporting diagnostic testing at Laboratory Response Network labs and at CDC,
- Urging healthcare providers to be on the lookout for the rash associated with monkeypox.
  - CDC has issued [Health Alert Network \(HAN\)](#) advisories and held a [Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity \(COCA\)](#) call to give healthcare providers more detailed information about how to identify and test for potential infections.
- Communicating more broadly to clinical and lab audiences through interactive calls.
- Raising awareness of the current situation with multiple partners to reach communities at risk for possible exposure to monkeypox, including by working with our partners at [Building Healthy Online Communities](#) [↗](#) to build awareness via social media.
  - Anyone, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation, can catch monkeypox. However, a number of the cases in the current outbreak are among gay, bisexual, or other men who have sex with men.
  - CDC has developed informational materials for consumers, including [fact sheets](#) for sexually active people and social gatherings where sex or prolonged, close contact may occur.

## Treatment/Vaccination

### What treatments are available for monkeypox?

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 treat and prevent monkeypox virus infections.

Antivirals, such as tecovirimat (TPOXX), may be recommended for people who are more likely to get severely ill, like patients with weakened immune systems.

The U.S. government has two stockpiled vaccines—JYNNEOS and ACAM2000—that can prevent monkeypox in people who have been exposed to the virus. Vaccines may be recommended for people who have had contact with someone who has monkeypox, or for healthcare and public health workers who may have been exposed to the virus.

### Do I need to get vaccinated against monkeypox?


CDC does not recommend widespread vaccination against monkeypox at this time. However, vaccination may be recommended for some people who:

- Are close personal contacts of people with monkeypox
- May have been exposed to the virus.
- May have increased risk of being exposed to the virus, such as people who perform laboratory testing to diagnose monkeypox.

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## Pets and Animals

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Could my pet get monkeypox? 

Monkeypox is zoonotic, meaning it can spread between animals and people. However, CDC does not currently believe that monkeypox poses a high risk to pets. We are continuing to monitor the situation closely.

During the 2003 monkeypox outbreak in the United States, we did not see disease spread to domestic animals other than prairie dogs, and we do not have reason to believe that we will see that now. However, we still recommend that people with monkeypox avoid interacting with animals and find someone else to take care of their pets while they recover.