

Mpox



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[Mpox Home](#)

CDC is updating webpages with the term "mpox" to reduce stigma and other issues associated with prior terminology. This change is aligned with the recent [World Health Organization](#) decision.

# Reducing Stigma in Mpox Communication and Community Engagement

Updated October 18, 2022

## How CDC is Framing Communication Around Mpox

Effective health communication about mpox can help people make well-informed decisions to protect their health and the health of their communities. Prevention messages are most successful when delivered by partners and trusted messengers to reach the public and affected communities.

CDC is carefully monitoring for mpox in the United States and providing frontline healthcare providers and public health partners with information about who is being diagnosed, what mpox looks like and how to prevent or manage the illness.

People can get mpox through specific behaviors, regardless of an individual's race/ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or other characteristics. Data show that gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (MSM) make up most cases in the current outbreak.

Given this, CDC is focusing on identifying and using specific channels that will directly reach populations at increased risk for mpox, across racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographic backgrounds. In addition to this focused messaging, CDC is also providing information to a wider audience about symptoms and the behaviors that can lead to the spread of mpox virus.

## How Partners Can Help Message about Mpox

- Partners can help by providing mpox information to different communities through various channels. While developing resources and messages, use [CDC's Health Equity Guiding Principles for Inclusive Communication](#).

### For Messages and Visuals to General Audiences:

- Promote messaging that provides information on what mpox is, how it can and cannot be spread, and prevention and care options.
- Balance the need to message to populations most impacted in the current outbreak with basic prevention messages that focus on behavior change.
- When using images of the rash from patients with mpox, include a range of disease severity, from mild to moderate to severe.
- Include images of people from diverse backgrounds and racial/ethnic groups.
- Avoid images from previous outbreaks in endemic countries as these may not reflect how the virus is currently presenting in humans during the 2022 outbreak.

## For Messages to Gay, Bisexual, and other MSM:

- It's important to reach any disproportionately affected community with non-alarmist, fact-based messaging about mpox that provides people with tools they can use to protect themselves and others.
- Messages should be clear and non-judgmental and avoid stigmatizing any sexual practice or community and ensure content is not homo-/bi-/trans-phobic or heterosexist.
- When focusing messages to gay, bisexual, and other MSM, use targeted channels that directly reach these audiences, such as specific websites, dating apps, or media programs.
- To help make messages resonate, use relatable or personal stories that depict people "like me" from the intended audience.

Messaging and dissemination tactics may need to be adapted to reach the communities who need the information as we learn more about the current mpox outbreak or as it evolves.

## How Partner Organizations Can Disseminate Messages for Events

CDC encourages partners to reach out to local event organizers to provide information about mpox and offer information and messages to share. The following are some tips:

- Conduct an environmental scan of upcoming, large-scale events in your community. Consider festivals where there may be spin-off or side events like dances and gatherings where people may have close, skin-to-skin contact with others.
- Take an inventory of other venues where close, skin-to-skin contact can occur, such as massage parlors, spas, saunas, and sex clubs.
- Engage trusted community-based organizations, community leaders, and community healthcare providers to connect with event organizers and impacted communities.
- Have a clear call to action. This can include raising awareness by sharing information, asking people to seek health care if they experience a rash, or directing community members to local healthcare providers who can coordinate testing.
- Provide event organizers with information and materials such as:
  - Messages that can be used on websites and social media sites
  - Talking points that event organizers can use when talking with their customers or attendees
  - An event organizer letter template (available as [Word](#) [32 KB, 2 pages] or [PDF](#) [1 MB, 2 pages] files), which organizers can download, adapt, and send to their attendees/customers
  - [Printed materials](#) that can be passed out at events and in venues
  - A point of contact if they have more questions or need information

It will take partnerships between healthcare providers, affected individuals, and public health officials to ensure people who need care can access it and protect their loved ones.

## Stigma Reduction Communication Strategies

The following table has been adapted from Hood & Friedman (2010), *Unveiling the hidden epidemic: a review of stigma associated with sexually transmissible infections*. *Sexual Health* (7):1-12.

### 1 Describe mpox as a legitimate public health issue that is relevant to all people

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### 2 Educate about mpox

Emphasize that in the current outbreak:

- Mpox virus is primarily spread through direct contact with an infectious rash, scabs, or body fluids. The virus may also be spread through:
  - a. respiratory secretions during prolonged, face-to-face contact, or during intimate physical contact, such as kissing, cuddling, or sex
  - b. touching objects, fabrics (such as clothing or linens) that previously touched the rash or body fluids of someone with mpox

c. being scratched or bitten by an infected animal

- People can get mpox through specific behaviors, regardless of an individual's race/ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or other characteristics
  - Mpox causes a rash
  - 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. Some people have been found to have infection but no symptoms. To date, however, there is no evidence that mpox spreads from people with no symptoms. CDC will continue to monitor for [new or changing information](#) about transmission.
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### 3 To frame the image of mpox

- Use inclusive language, such as 'us' and 'we' pronouns
- Use non-sensationalistic language and images
- Use language that resonates with the audience
- Present concepts that the audience will be receptive to hearing or reading
- Use positive, diverse, and credible images
- Emphasize prevention strategies, symptom recognition, and the treatable nature of mpox to minimize fear, promote action and a sense of personal agency

Last Reviewed: October 18, 2022