



Plain Language

What do I need to know about Mpox?

Words to Know

Mpox

- A kind of sickness. Mpox is a virus, like the flu or COVID-19. You might hear some people call Mpox “monkeypox.”

PPE

- Tools that people can wear to help keep them from getting sick. Some kinds of PPE are masks, gloves, and safety goggles. PPE stands for “personal protective equipment”

Symptoms

- Signs that someone is sick.

Vaccine

- A shot or medication that protects someone from a certain sickness.

To Start

This toolkit is about Mpox. **Mpox** is a kind of sickness. You might hear some people call Mpox “monkeypox.”

In the past, not too many people caught Mpox, but in 2022 and 2023, more people have caught Mpox than before. That’s why we want to make sure everyone has good information about Mpox.

This toolkit will answer questions like:

- What is Mpox?
- What are the signs of Mpox?
- How does Mpox spread?
- How will I know if I get Mpox?
- How can I protect myself from getting Mpox?
- What should I do if I get Mpox?
- What if I live in a nursing home or group home? What if someone there gets Mpox?
- Does Mpox have anything to do with being gay?

This toolkit talks about sex, because Mpox can spread when people have sex.

We won’t go into details about sex in this toolkit. To learn more about sex, you can watch the videos at:

Real Talk - <https://www.real-talk.org/videos/> or

The National Council on Independent Living - <https://ncil.org/resources/sex-ed-for-individuals-with-i-dd/>

What is Mpox?

Mpox is a kind of sickness. It is a virus, like the flu or COVID-19.

Scientists found out about Mpox in 1958. They found the sickness in monkeys, and that's why it is sometimes called Monkeypox.

Mpox spreads from person to person very easily. People usually don't die from Mpox, but they can get very sick.

It's important to know the signs of Mpox, as well as how Mpox spreads. We can help protect ourselves and our community from Mpox.

What are the signs of Mpox?

There are many signs that someone might have Mpox. You might hear these signs called symptoms. **Symptom** is another word for signs that someone is sick.

The main symptom of Mpox is a rash that looks like pimples or blisters.

Mpox rashes usually show up on someone's hands, feet, mouth, face, chest, or genitals (your private parts, like the vulva or penis). Someone may only get a rash on one of these places on their body, or they could get rashes in many or all of these places.

Some people who get Mpox only get a rash, while other people get more sick.

Some other symptoms people can get from Mpox are fever, headache, body aches, tiredness, feeling very hot or cold, and swelling on the sides of the neck.

Mpox can last for 2 weeks to a month. It can take a long time for Mpox rashes to heal, and people with Mpox can still spread Mpox until their rashes heal.

For example:

Callum gets Mpox. He got a rash on his hand, and he also had a fever.

Callum's fever went away after a week. He felt all better, but his rash was still there.

That meant Callum could still spread Mpox, so Callum stayed home another week until his rash healed.

How does Mpox spread?

Mpox spreads from person to person very easily. If someone has Mpox, the Mpox virus lives inside them for a while. The virus comes out as a rash, or it can come out in someone's saliva.

People can get Mpox from touching someone else's Mpox rash, or by staying too close to someone else with Mpox. Staying too close can mean things like cuddling, kissing, having sex. It could also mean having a long talk close to someone else's face, or staying near the same person for a long time.

Here are some examples of how Mpox can spread:

Callum has Mpox. He feels okay, and only has a rash. Callum meets up with his boyfriend, Jesse, and they have sex. A rash on Callum's body touches Jesse's body. Later, Jesse finds out he got Mpox.

Bea has Mpox. She feels okay - she's just a little tired, and her rashes have mostly healed. Bea lives with her support worker, Diane. Diane helps Bea get dressed, and she stays close to Bea most of the day. Later, Diane finds out she got Mpox.

Mpox can also spread in other ways. Animals can get sick with Mpox, and sick animals can give Mpox to humans. Animals that died from Mpox can still give Mpox to humans.

This does not happen very often, but it is still important to know about.

How will I know if I get Mpox?

People usually do not get Mpox without a rash, so if you get a rash, it might be Mpox. But people get rashes for all kinds of reasons. The only way to know for sure if you have Mpox is to get an Mpox test.

There are many places to get an Mpox test done. Most doctors and hospitals give Mpox tests.

You can call your local health department to find out some places, or you can call your doctor.

Mpox tests get done by a doctor. The doctor will take a sample of your rash by using a cotton swab to rub the rash. It might hurt a little bit, but your doctor needs to do this to get the sample.

Then, your doctor will send the sample to a lab, where they will test the sample for Mpox.

It usually takes around 3 days. Then, your doctor will let you know if you have Mpox or not.

In the meantime, you should act like you do have Mpox, so don't go out, or stay near other people.

How can I protect myself from getting Mpox?

Be careful if you want to have sex with people you don't know well. Talk to the people you want to get close to, and make sure they know the signs of Mpox. Make sure they don't have Mpox before you touch them.

Do not touch animals you do not know. Never touch a dead animal, since the animal might have had Mpox.

Wash your hands often with soap and water. Wear a mask if you have to be

around someone with Mpox, and try to avoid big parties or places where lots of people touch each other.

There is one big thing you can do to protect yourself from Mpox: get the Mpox vaccine.

A **vaccine** is a shot that protects someone from a certain sickness. The Mpox vaccine can make it less likely that you will catch Mpox, and if you do get Mpox, you will get less sick from it.

The U.S. government does not have enough Mpox vaccines for everyone, so not everyone can get the Mpox vaccine. You can get the Mpox vaccine if you spent time with someone who has Mpox. If you find out you were around someone with Mpox, talk to your doctor right away. Your doctor can help you find out where to get a vaccine. You might still get Mpox, but the vaccine can help you get less sick.

Some other groups of people can also get the vaccine. Some other groups that can get the vaccine are:

- People who work somewhere that they might get Mpox, like a hospital.
- People who had sex somewhere public, like a sex club, in the last 6 months.
- People who have HIV or are [immunocompromised](#), and have a higher chance of getting Mpox.

Men who have sex with men can get the vaccine, and partners of men who have sex with men can also get the vaccine. Some [transgender or nonbinary](#) people can get the vaccine if, in the last 6 months, they:

- Got a sexually-transmitted infection (like chlamydia or gonorrhea), OR
- Had sex with more than one person

Men who have sex with men, and transgender people, have been getting Mpox more than other people. Getting the vaccine can help stop Mpox from spreading, which means more people will be protected from Mpox.

If you think getting the vaccine would help protect you, talk to your doctor. You do not need to tell your doctor about your sex life. You can just say that you want the vaccine.

What should I do if I get Mpox?

If you get Mpox, the first thing you should do is let your doctor know. There is no cure for Mpox. You just have to wait until the Mpox goes away. But your doctor can give you medicine to help your symptoms, or other advice for what to do next.

The most important thing to do is to keep your Mpox from spreading. Try to stay in your room or house, away from other people, and wear a mask if you need to be around others.

You can take Advil or Tylenol if your head or body hurts, and you can put lotion on rashes to make them hurt or itch less. Taking a warm bath can also help.

Try not to touch your Mpox rashes. Touching the rashes makes them take longer to heal, and it also makes the Mpox virus more likely to spread. You can cover your rashes with bandages or clothing.

Tell the people in your life that you have Mpox. Talk to anyone you've been close to in the past 2 weeks. It can be hard to talk to people about getting sick, so here is a script to help:

"Hi. I need to talk to you about something important. Do you have a few minutes to talk privately? I found out on [DATE] that I have Mpox. Mpox can spread from being close to other people, and since we spent time together recently, I wanted to let you know.

You should check if you have any symptoms of Mpox, and get tested right away if you have symptoms. The CDC has information on their website at www.cdc.gov/mpox."

Lastly, try to get a lot of rest! Mpox is not fun to go through, but you will get better.

What if I live in a nursing home or group home? What if someone there gets Mpox?

Lots of people live together in nursing homes and group homes. People stay close together most of the time, which makes it easier for Mpox to spread. It's important to make a plan just in case someone gets Mpox.

Talk to your support staff, and make sure there is a plan for what happens if someone gets Mpox. Make sure you can get an Mpox test if you think you might have Mpox. Ask if everyone in your nursing home or group home can learn about Mpox, so everyone knows how to protect themselves.

Make sure that your nursing home or group home has PPE. **PPE** stands for personal protective equipment, which are tools that people can wear to help keep them from getting sick. Some kinds of PPE are masks, gloves, and safety goggles. If someone gets Mpox, support staff should wear PPE, and change their PPE after working with someone with Mpox.

People with Mpox should stay in a room away from everyone else, and use a different bathroom than everyone else. People with Mpox should do laundry separate from everyone else, and have a separate garbage can than everyone else. That helps make Mpox less likely to spread.

Does Mpox have anything to do with being gay?

Anyone can get Mpox, but gay men have been getting Mpox more than other people. Gay men may be more likely to get Mpox than other people.

Scientists think they know why this is happening. They think that in 2022, someone who had Mpox went to a gay club. They probably didn't know that they had Mpox, and may have accidentally given Mpox to other people in the club. Then, Mpox started spreading in the gay community. Since gay men usually hang out together, more gay people got Mpox.

Some people think that means Mpox is a “gay sickness”, and that only gay people can get Mpox. They think gay people get Mpox as a punishment for being gay, and that getting Mpox means that someone is a bad person. None of these things are true!

Getting Mpox is not anyone’s fault, and getting sick doesn’t make someone a bad person. Anyone can get Mpox, whether they are gay or not, and all humans get sick sometimes.

Mpox is not something to be ashamed of. Making people feel bad about having Mpox is dangerous, since it might stop people from getting help if they get sick. Everyone should get to love who they want to love, and everyone should get the help they need if they get sick.