

Mpox - What You Need to Know

What is mpox?

Mpox is a viral infection caused by a virus from the family of orthopoxviruses which includes smallpox. **The most notable symptom of mpox is a rash** that can occur on the hands, feet, chest, face, mouth, or areas around the genitals. Other symptoms include fever, chills, swollen lymph nodes, fatigue, and achiness (including muscle aches, headaches, and back aches). Respiratory illness symptoms like sore throat, congestion, or cough may also occur with mpox infection.

Symptoms of mpox typically begin within 21 days of exposure. It may take the full 21 days before symptoms start. Flu-like symptoms may appear first, followed by a rash 1-4 days later. The rash from mpox infection often starts out looking like pimples. As it progresses, the rash will blister and scab and can cause itching and pain. The rash is not considered fully healed until a new layer of skin has formed.

How is mpox spread?

Mpox is spread through close intimate or sexual contact with an infected person. This includes **direct skin-to-skin contact** with mpox rashes or scabs, contact with saliva, mucus, bodily fluids from an infected person, or extended close face-to-face talking and breathing. Mpox is also spread through contact with objects such as bedding, clothing, or surfaces used by an infected person.

Mpox is a zoonotic disease, which means it can spread from animals to humans and vice versa. People infected with mpox should avoid contact with animals, including pets, to prevent further spread.

It's not clear if mpox can spread in pools, hot tubs, or splash pads, but the mpox virus is killed in water containing the proper chlorine level recommended by the CDC for disinfection.

Who is at risk of contracting mpox?

Anyone can get mpox. The virus **does not discriminate against any group**. However, data indicate that some people may be at increased risk:

- Men who have sex with men
- Transgender people
- Gender-diverse people
- Sex workers
- People who have had (in the last 6 months) or will have more than one sexual or intimate partner
- People who have one or more sexually transmitted infections
- People who have sex at large public events in areas with mpox transmission



Flip over to read about testing and prevention of mpox.



Who should get tested for mpox?

Even if you have previously been vaccinated or already had an mpox infection, you should **get tested if you develop a rash** and think you may have been exposed.

You will need to wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth to your testing appointment. You will also need to cover your rash with a long sleeved shirt, pants, or bandage. You can find Colorado providers who offer testing at <https://bit.ly/COMpoxTesting>.

It is important that you **notify close contacts in the event you are diagnosed with mpox**. Close contacts include sexual partners, people who you've come into close contact with, including people you've hugged, cuddled, kissed or had close skin-to-skin contact with, and anyone with whom you've shared cups, towels, bedding, or other objects. If you prefer to anonymously notify close contacts, there are services such as tellyourpartner.org that will notify them and assist with testing recommendations.

How can we prevent the spread of mpox?

There is not a specific treatment for mpox. Your medical provider may order antiviral medication if you are at risk for or develop severe infection. However, there are ways we can prevent mpox spread, including avoiding social gatherings such as raves, parties, or clubs where minimal clothing might be worn and there is a chance for close skin-to-skin contact. Mpox is more likely to spread in spaces where contact with multiple intimate sexual partners occurs. Stay home if you feel sick or develop a rash.

The mpox vaccine is an important part of preventing disease transmission or spread.

Who should get vaccinated for mpox?

Anyone who thinks they are at risk of exposure to mpox can be vaccinated. You should get vaccinated if you have had intimate or sexual contact with a person at risk of contracting mpox or who may have an mpox infection. **Two doses of the mpox vaccine four weeks apart are needed for maximum protection**. It will take two weeks after the second dose to be fully protected. Get vaccinated as soon as possible if you are exposed to mpox.

If administered a certain way, the mpox vaccine can leave a scar. You can request that it be given in a discrete location or in a way that it will not scar if you want to avoid the risk of a visible scarring.

In Colorado, the state health department lists mpox vaccine providers at <https://bit.ly/COMpoxVaccineProviders>. The vaccine is free and you will not need to show an ID or insurance to receive it.

Sources

<https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/mpox/if-sick/transmission.html>
<https://cdc.gov/poxvirus/mpox/symptoms/index.html>
<https://cdc.gov/poxvirus/mpox/testing/testing-basics.html>
<https://cdphe.colorado.gov/diseases-a-to-z/mpox>

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