

## What you need to know about monkeypox: Suggested talking points

- **The U.S. has recorded more than 9,000 monkeypox cases and declared the outbreak a public health emergency.**
  - For decades, monkeypox was a rare disease linked to contact with infected animals. The first known case of human infection was reported in 1970.
  - Now, human-to-human transmission is occurring at [a large scale around the world](#), with most cases linked to sexual contact.
  - The number one symptom is a rash that eventually develops into pus-filled blisters.
  - Other symptoms include fevers, chills, headaches, muscle aches, exhaustion, and swollen lymph nodes.
  - Symptoms last two to four weeks, and cases can be severe and even fatal.
  - If you are infected, isolate yourself and wash your hands regularly to avoid transmitting the disease to others.
- **Most monkeypox cases have been linked to sexual contact, though there are other ways people can get infected.**
  - Monkeypox primarily spreads among humans through close, skin-to-skin contact, especially with the disease's blister-like rash.
  - People can also get infected through exposure to contaminated items, such as clothing or bedding.
  - It's possible for monkeypox to spread through airborne particles, but this type of transmission seems to be uncommon.
  - Evidence shows that a pregnant person can pass on the virus to their fetus.
  - Although monkeypox is a serious threat, it is much less contagious than COVID-19. People do not need to worry about getting infected in most public places, although places like parties, clubs, and festivals pose a higher risk.
- **Vaccines are available but can be difficult to find.**
  - Two existing smallpox vaccines are effective at preventing monkeypox. However, one is not recommended for people with certain health conditions, and the other is in limited supply.
  - Due to vaccine supply shortage, only certain people are currently [eligible for a vaccine](#).
  - Men who have sex with men and their sexual partners are considered higher risk right now because the vast majority of cases have been among this population.
  - For everyone else, the primary way to stay protected is to avoid close contact or sharing objects with infected individuals.
  - The CDC [also recommends](#) frequent hand-washing and sticking to social gatherings with more clothing and less skin-to-skin contact.

## What you need to know about monkeypox: Frequently asked questions

### 1. How does monkeypox spread?

For decades, monkeypox was a rare disease spread from animals to humans. Now, the virus is spreading through human-to-human transmission and causing the largest monkeypox outbreak ever documented. Researchers are still investigating how monkeypox spreads. So far, we know that most cases have been linked to sexual contact and the primary way people get infected is through close, skin-to-skin contact, especially with the disease's blister-like rash. However, people can also get infected through exposure to contaminated items, such as clothing or bedding. It's also possible for monkeypox to spread through airborne particles, though this type of transmission seems to be uncommon. There is also evidence showing that a pregnant person can pass on the virus to their fetus.

### 2. How concerned should I be about monkeypox?

The U.S. has recorded more than 9,000 monkeypox cases and declared the outbreak a public health emergency. Symptoms last two to four weeks, and cases can be severe and even fatal. Although monkeypox is a serious threat, it is much less contagious than COVID-19, and people do not need to worry about getting infected in most public places. Men who have sex with men and their sexual partners are currently at higher risk since the vast majority of monkeypox cases have been among this population so far. But this certainly does not mean the virus is limited to gay men or the LGBTQ community.

To stay protected, get a vaccine if you are eligible. If you are not eligible, the primary way to stay protected is to avoid close contact or sharing objects with infected individuals. The CDC [also recommends](#) frequent hand-washing and sticking to social gatherings with more clothing and less skin-to-skin contact.

### 3. How can I get a monkeypox vaccine?

Monkeypox vaccines are available but can be difficult to find at this time. Two existing smallpox vaccines are effective at preventing monkeypox. However, one is not recommended for people with certain health conditions, and the other is in limited supply. Currently, only certain people are [eligible for a vaccine](#). This includes people who are confirmed contacts of infected individuals. People who know that one of their sexual partners in the past two weeks was infected or who have had multiple sexual partners in the past two weeks in a high-transmission area are also eligible.