

# What You Need to Know About Mpox (Monkeypox)

## **Mpox at a glance**

- Mpox is a disease caused by a virus in the same family as the virus that causes smallpox.
- People with mpox often get a rash, along with other symptoms.
- Mpox is spread through close contact with infected people or animals.
- There is no specific treatment for mpox.

## **Overview**

Mpox (formerly known as monkeypox) is a disease caused by infection with a virus, known as *Monkeypox virus*. This virus is part of the same family as the virus that causes smallpox. People with mpox often get a rash, along with other symptoms. The rash will go through several stages, including scabs, before healing. Mpox is not related to chickenpox.

Mpox is a [zoonotic disease](#), meaning it can be spread between animals and people. It is endemic, or found regularly, in parts of Central and West Africa. The virus that causes mpox has been found in [small rodents, monkeys, and other mammals](#) that live in these areas.

## **Discovery and history**

The virus that causes mpox was discovered in 1958, when two outbreaks of a pox-like disease occurred in colonies of monkeys kept for research. Despite being named "monkeypox" originally, the source of the disease remains unknown. Scientists suspect African rodents and non-human primates (like monkeys) might harbor the virus and infect people.

The first human case of mpox was recorded in 1970, in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In 2022, mpox spread around the world. Before that, cases of mpox in other places were rare and usually linked to travel or to animals being imported from regions where mpox is endemic.

The World Health Organization renamed the disease in 2022 to follow modern guidelines for naming illnesses. Those guidelines recommend that disease names should avoid offending cultural, social, national, regional, professional or ethnic groups and minimize unnecessary negative effects on trade, travel, tourism or animal welfare. The virus that causes it still has its historic name, however.

## Types

There are two types of mpox: clade I and clade II.

- **Clade I** is responsible for the [current rise of cases in Central and Eastern Africa](#). Historically, clade I caused higher numbers of severe illnesses than clade II, with up to 10% of people dying from it. Recent outbreaks have seen much lower death rates of about 1-3.3%.
- **Clade II** is the type that caused the [global outbreak that began in 2022](#). Infections from clade II mpox are less severe. More than 99.9% of people survive. Clade II is endemic to West Africa.

Countries in West Africa are Clade II endemic, while countries in Central Africa are Clade I endemic.

## Signs and symptoms

People with mpox often get a rash that may be located on hands, feet, chest, face, or mouth or near the genitals, including penis, testicles, labia, vagina, and anus. The incubation period is 3-17 days. During this time, a person does not have symptoms and may feel fine.

**Keep Reading:** [Signs and Symptoms of Mpox](#)

## Risk of severe disease

Although cases of mpox are not life-threatening, some people may be more likely to get severely ill, including

- People with severely weakened immune systems
- Children younger than 1
- People with a history of eczema
- People who are pregnant

**Keep Reading:** [What to Do If You Are Sick](#)

## How it spreads

Both types of mpox can spread through:

- Direct contact with infected animals
- Close contact (including intimate contact) with a person with mpox
- Direct contact with contaminated materials

**Keep Reading:** [How Mpox Spreads](#)

## Prevention

There are several ways you can protect yourself and others from mpox, including

- Getting vaccinated. Check with your healthcare provider to find out if the [mpox vaccine](#) is recommended for you.
- Avoiding close, skin-to-skin contact with people who have a rash that looks like mpox.
- Avoiding contact with materials that a person with mpox has used, including sharing eating utensils and cups, and handling their bedding or clothing.
- If you do get mpox, isolate at home, and cover lesions and wear a mask if you must be around others.
- If you are in an area of Western or Central Africa where mpox occurs regularly, avoid contact with live or dead wild animals.

**Keep Reading:** [Preventing Mpox](#)

## Testing and diagnosis

Mpox testing is only recommended if you have a rash consistent with mpox. People who think they have mpox should visit a healthcare provider to ask about testing.

**Keep Reading:** [Getting Tested for Mpox](#)

## Treatment and recovery

There is no treatment specifically for mpox. The type of treatment for a person with mpox will depend on how sick someone gets or whether they're likely to get severely ill. Most people with mpox recover fully within 2 to 4 weeks without the need for medical treatment.

[Learn what to do](#) if you are sick with mpox.

**Health Care Providers:** [Clinical Care of Mpox](#)

► For Monkeypox information from the **Virginia Department of Health (VDH)** go to: [www.vdh.virginia.gov/monkeypox](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/monkeypox)

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