

Mpox

Last updated: **August 21, 2024**

Mpox, formerly known as monkeypox, is a disease caused by the mpox virus. It enters the body through broken skin (even if not visible) or the respiratory tract. It can also enter through the eyes, nose or mouth.

[Vaccination](#) is still available to close contacts and those at the highest risk of infection.

How it spreads

Mpox can spread from animals to humans, from person to person and through contact with objects used by someone with mpox.

Mpox spreads through close, personal, and often skin-to-skin contact, including:

- Direct contact with sores or blisters of a person with mpox
- Contact with items like bedding or towels that someone with mpox has used
- Respiratory droplets during prolonged close, face-to-face contact with a person who has mpox

Most cases in 2022 were passed during close, intimate contact during sex.

Symptoms

Symptoms can last 2 to 4 weeks and occur in two stages.

First stage

In the first stage, symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Intense headache
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Back pain
- Muscle pain
- Fatigue or exhaustion
- Less common symptoms can include sore throat, cough, nausea or vomiting and diarrhea

Second stage

The second stage usually starts 1 to 5 days after stage one. During this stage, you may develop a rash on your body. This rash can appear on any body part, including your hands and feet, legs and arms, face or genitals.

Mpox sores usually last between 2 to 3 weeks. The sores change in appearance over time from raised spots to small blisters filled with fluid. They eventually form a scab and fall off.

If you are exposed to mpox

If you have had contact with a person with known or suspected mpox, please monitor for symptoms. Symptoms can develop within 5 days to 3 weeks after exposure.

Public health is reaching out to known contacts of cases at risk of developing the infection. Contact your [regional health authority's local public health office](#) if you think you've been exposed but have not yet heard from public health.

Public health does not use pre-recorded or automated calls to notify individuals of infections or possible exposure to mpox or other communicable diseases.

If you become ill

If you become ill and have had contact with a person with known or suspected mpox:

- Contact your health care provider to get tested as soon as possible. Let them know if you have had contact with someone who has known or suspected mpox
- Find a clinic at [SmartSexResource.com](https://www.smartsexresource.com)

While waiting to see your health care provider, please:

- Avoid close, intimate contact and sex with others
- Do not share towels, clothing, sheets or other things that have touched your skin
- Cover sores or blisters as much as possible with clothing or bandages
- Wear a mask when you are in close contact with others
- Ask members of your household, family, or friends to look after pets so you do not spread mpox to animals
- Dispose masks, bandages, or other contaminated materials in a high-quality garbage bag. Keep the bag in an animal-proof container so pets or wild animals (particularly, rodents) can't get into it

It is especially important to avoid close contact with people who may be at greater risk of experiencing severe illness, including pregnant people, people with a weakened immune system or children.

If you have mpox, public health will contact you to give more instructions.

If you test positive for mpox

See your healthcare provider or go to your nearest Urgent Primary Care Centre or Emergency Department if you experience the following:

- Worsening or new throat or rectal pain
- Severe fever or chills
- Shortness of breath or chest pain
- New pox blisters on multiple parts of your body

Treatment options

Mpox is usually a mild illness, and most people recover on their own after a few weeks. People experiencing severe disease may need medications to manage pain or skin infections. In rare cases, some people may need treatment in hospital.

Vaccination against mpox

Imvamune® is the vaccine used in Canada to protect against mpox. It helps your body build immunity without getting very sick.

The vaccine can be used two ways:

Before exposure to mpox

The vaccine is given before you are exposed to the virus. This helps protect you and reduce your risk of getting mpox. This is called Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis.

After exposure to mpox, before you have symptoms

The vaccine is given after being exposed to the virus. This prevents illness or severe outcomes. This is called Post-Exposure Prophylaxis.

For more information about who is eligible to get a vaccine and how to book an appointment, please visit:

- [Fraser Health](#)
- [Vancouver Coastal Health](#)
- [Island Health](#)
- [Interior Health](#)
- [Northern Health](#)

No vaccine is 100% effective. If you have been vaccinated and develop symptoms, follow the steps under "**If you become ill**" to protect yourself and others.

Useful resources

For information on the situation in B.C., please visit [BC Centre for Disease Control: Mpox](#).

For information on the situation in Canada, refer to the [Public Health Agency of Canada: Mpox \(monkeypox\)](#).

For recommendations for the 2SGBTQ+ community, please visit [BC Centre for Disease Control: Recommendations for Two-Spirit, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer communities \(2SGBTQ+\)](#).

For other information about mpox, visit:

- [BC Centre for Disease Control: Mpox \(Monkeypox\) Vaccine](#) (PDF 289KB)
- [First Nations Health Authority Graphics PDF: What-Is-Mpox?](#)
- [Government of Canada: Mpox \(monkeypox\) - Advice for travellers](#)

For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/more/resources/healthlink-bc-files or your local public health unit. For non-emergency health information and advice in B.C. visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call **8-1-1** (toll-free). For the deaf and hard of hearing, call **7-1-1**. Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.